

Reviving Post-War Physically Degraded Neighborhoods: Municipal Collaboration in Self-Organized Initiatives

Master's thesis for the Spatial Planning programme, specialisation Land and Real Estate Markets



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Colophon

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Abstract

In recent years, municipalities in the Netherlands have focused on the urban renewal of post-war, physically degraded neighborhoods. De Hogenkamp in Zwolle faces these issues, like backlogged maintenance and a need for sustainability measures.

While municipalities are expected to play a facilitative role through collaborative governance and supporting self-organized neighborhood initiatives, a gap remains in understanding how they can effectively engage in neighborhoods where initiatives are driven by Homeowner Associations with fragmented ownership. The complexity of public-private collaboration in this context is underexplored.

This study examines municipal collaboration strategies that support self-organized initiatives, enhancing the living conditions in the Zwolle neighborhood. These collaboration strategies differ in terms of their approach, which involves directing, facilitating, or distancing. This research examines the governance dynamics, participation barriers, and financial mechanisms associated with urban renewal. An evaluation framework is developed to assess proposed strategies based on the broad welfare implications of the municipal interventions.

With the help of one case study, interviews, workshops, and desk research, interventions are analyzed, providing actionable insights on collaboration strategies for self-organized initiatives in post-war, physically degraded neighborhoods. Developing this framework will strengthen municipal support and contribute to academic discourse on urban renewal, participatory governance, and sustainable spatial planning.

Keywords: *Urban renewal, post-war physically degraded neighborhoods, homeowner associations, municipal collaboration strategy, self-organized citizen initiatives, transformative governance, energy transition*

Preface

Writing my thesis was a challenging and unforgettable experience over the past few months. I really enjoyed the development I made in my academic skills and the process of this research in collaboration with the municipality of Zwolle. I was extremely fortunate because I was not going through this process alone and was supported by amazing people around me.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Problem Statement

The need for urban transformation in aging neighborhoods, which would improve housing quality, has become a more pressing issue over recent years. Homeowner associations manage residential buildings and long-term maintenance. However, these associations struggle with their finances and decision-making, which results in backlogged maintenance and sustainability measures. External support from the municipalities is essential in guiding and facilitating neighborhood transformations to improve housing quality.

The neighborhood of De Hogenkamp in Zwolle faces these challenges. There is a significant housing demand; the apartments have backlogged maintenance and require sustainability measures. Due to the financial situation, these homeowner associations need money to finance these measures. This incentivized the addition of new apartments on top of the existing apartment buildings (Weytingh et al., 2024). The municipality has already laid the groundwork for transformation, with the introduction of the new parking norm in March 2025 and the establishment of the parking hub strategy in late 2024. Several challenges remain: aligning different resident perspectives, ensuring financial feasibility, and phasing neighborhood transformations in collaboration with various homeowner associations. The residents of these apartments are a diverse group. There are different ages, financial situations, and future housing plans. The willingness to invest raises an additional challenge for homeowner associations.

Citizen participation has become increasingly popular. To ensure that redevelopment incentives and efforts are socially inclusive, well-communicated, and aligned with community needs, urban governance can be accomplished (Raynor et al., 2018). An effective strategy is critical for municipalities and citizens to implement participation processes and effectively prevent struggles within these processes (Uittenbroek et al., 2019). Studies indicate that fostering the trust, collaboration, and shared decision-making of co-production between municipal engagement and citizen participation can enhance the success of neighborhood transformations (Horlings, 2017; Schively, 2007). A gap remains in the literature on how municipalities can approach and facilitate collaborative action with homeowner associations to enhance housing quality and urban livability.

Another critical aspect is the already-initiated self-organized efforts by homeowner associations. The homeowner associations recognize the deteriorating housing conditions and, thus, the need for maintenance, sustainability measures, and potential rearrangement to create new apartments to finance these measures (Weytingh et al., 2024). While some active members of homeowner associations support redevelopment, others remain passive due to financial concerns, skepticism toward sustainable investments, differing plans for the future (such as moving), and a lack of engagement (Benford & Snow, 2000; Fors et al., 2021). Given how complex these dynamics are, the municipality of Zwolle must carefully assess different strategic approaches to effectively facilitate urban renewal and ensure inclusive decision-making. By evaluating these approaches, the municipality can determine the most effective approach to balance governance support and community-driven initiatives, resulting in a justifiable urban renewal of De Hogenkamp.

1.2 Research Aim and Research Questions

1.2.1 Research Aim

This independent research aimed to investigate the strategic collaboration role the municipality of Zwolle can play in the transformation of De Hogenkamp, a post-war physically degraded neighborhood.

This research examined how the municipality can collaborate with various stakeholders, including homeowner associations, residents, public-private partnerships, and private sector entities. This collaboration aimed to enhance the urban space while considering arguments related to social, economic, environmental, and spatial justice. This research will examine self-organized initiatives by homeowner associations and broader municipal strategies, as well as their impact on neighborhood transformations.

The study aims to develop a structured framework for evaluating the municipality's potential strategic roles, including that of a director taking a leading position, a facilitator supporting self-organized initiatives, or a distancing role where it remains minimally involved. Given the challenges post-war physically degraded neighborhoods have, such as backlogged maintenance, climate adaptation, and energy transition requirements, a well-structured municipal strategy is needed to ensure effective and inclusive redevelopment.

A key aspect of this research is how the municipality can facilitate and stimulate the transformation. Municipalities can provide clear urban planning guidelines, define maximum building heights, and outline phased redevelopment strategies to ensure a cohesive and sustainable urban environment. Examining what instruments the municipality can use to facilitate the transformation is vital. The research also investigates how the municipality can evaluate and compare these strategies. Societal costs and benefits, their impact on homeowners and residents, and their contribution to the public good are all factors to consider when assessing the strategies. Since financial situations and, thus, willingness to invest can differ, the research will explore how the municipality can approach these disparities and achieve a more inclusive redevelopment.

This independent research aims to recommend a municipal strategy that the municipality of Zwolle can use to enhance the neighborhood transformation of De Hogenkamp and how the municipality can enhance its transformative governance. The insights from this research will be relevant for discourses on (post-war physically degraded) neighborhood collaboration strategies in other municipalities, participatory planning, co-production between municipalities and residents, and transformative governance within municipalities.

1.2.2 Research Questions

To achieve the aim of this research, a leading research question has been formulated, followed by sub-research questions that collectively contribute to the main research question.

The main research question is as follows:

How can the municipality of Zwolle strategically collaborate with the self-organized initiative of the homeowner associations in De Hogenkamp to stimulate inclusive and sustainable urban renewal?

The main research question will be answered by first answering the following sub-research questions:

1. *How do municipalities in the Netherlands approach homeowner associations in post-war physically degraded neighborhoods, and what policy instruments are available to stimulate urban renewal?*
2. *How can we translate these approaches to suitable collaboration strategies for the municipality to facilitate the self-organized citizen initiative of De Hogenkamp?*
3. *Which municipal participation (/facilitation) strategy is preferred by the municipality of Zwolle to support the self-organized citizen initiative of De Hogenkamp, assessed on criteria with roots in scientific literature?*
4. *What institutional capacities and governance conditions are required within the organisation of the municipality of Zwolle to stimulate a transformative urban renewal strategy in De Hogenkamp?*

Order of research questions and explanation of terminology

In these research questions, a logical order is present. In the first research question, an inventory is made of possible policy instruments that are available by collecting instruments with the help of interviews with municipalities. The second research question will use these possible policy instruments to design suitable strategies that facilitate the self-organized citizen initiative. The third research question will then use these suitable strategies and evaluate them in collaboration with the municipality of Zwolle through the form of a workshop. Finally, the fourth research question will explore the required institutional capacities and governance conditions within the municipality of Zwolle to achieve the preferred collaboration strategy and thus stimulate a transformative urban renewal strategy for the self-organized citizen initiative of De Hogenkamp.

A few core terms in the research questions will be explained below.

Post-war physically degraded neighborhoods:

Urban residential areas in the Netherlands, built during the so-called “wederopbouw” period after World War II, from 1954 to 1965. These areas now suffer from aging infrastructure, backlogged maintenance, and the need for energy transition measures. These neighborhoods often consist of apartment buildings (owned by homeowner associations) and require improvement to prevent further deterioration of the neighborhood.

Self-organized citizen initiative:

An urban renewal effort initiated by residents themselves without direct stimulation or direction by the government or institutions.

Homeowner associations:

Homeowner associations (Verenigingen van Eigenaren in Dutch) are formal organizations formed by property owners, often situated in shared apartment buildings. They are responsible for collective decision-making on maintenance, repairs, sustainability upgrades, and building management, and are often situated in post-war physically degraded buildings.

Inclusive and sustainable urban renewal:

An urban redevelopment that not only improves the physical infrastructure but also involves all residents, including marginalized groups, while also ensuring long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits such as energy efficiency, climate adaptation, and social cohesion.

Collaboration strategies:

These collaboration strategies are designed to explore different possible futures, to assist stakeholders in anticipating challenges and opportunities to make well-informed decisions by comparing trade-offs and potential impacts before committing to them.

Institutional capacities and governance conditions:

Institutional capacities and governance conditions involve the abilities, resources, and structures within institutions and political environments that enable or hinder an organization from planning, coordinating, and implementing complex urban renewal. Strong capacities and supportive governance conditions are vital for implementing transformative strategies and transforming organizations internally.

A transformative urban renewal strategy:

Neighborhood redevelopment strategy that aims for systemic, long-term change by rethinking both the physical environment and the governance structures. This strategy creates a new, future-focused vision that involves shared goals, collaboration, adaptability, and a lasting impact.

1.3 Societal Relevance

The societal relevance is partly described in the problem statement and research aim. There are no clear strategies for the urban challenges in Zwolle and other Dutch municipalities on how to deal with post-war physically degraded neighborhoods. This research can give insights into the different strategic approaches and their impact, giving policymakers actionable insights that could improve their decision-making on handling the post-war physically degraded neighborhoods.

This independent research will provide the municipality of Zwolle with a structured framework for decision-making, ensuring the alignment of redevelopment efforts with broader social, economic, spatial justice, and political considerations. The framework will encompass different collaboration strategies, ranging from directing, where the municipality intervenes by, for instance, buying and developing property, to distancing, where the municipality does not intervene. Various instruments available to municipalities in the Netherlands will be described that can be used to implement these collaboration strategies, guiding the municipality in accomplishing its goal by supporting self-organized initiatives.

This research also enhances the clarity of the impact that different strategies have on post-war, physically degrading neighborhoods, sustainability, and the residents, thereby improving long-term decision-making by municipalities. The national discussion on urban renewal is another significant part of this research. The research findings could also be applied to similar neighborhoods in the Netherlands, guiding municipalities through the complexities of the post-war physically degraded neighborhoods. Ultimately, this research aims to bridge the gap between the theoretical and practical aspects of governance, providing solutions that enhance livability, prevent social displacement, and promote climate adaptation and energy transition.

This research contributes to the discussions on post-war urban renewal strategies for physically degraded neighborhoods by conducting a case study on De Hogenkamp in Zwolle. This case study

examines how the municipality can collaborate with self-organized initiatives by homeowner associations to address maintenance backlogs, energy transition, and climate adaptation. This research also draws insights from other Municipalities in the Netherlands to compare similar urban renewal developments and the municipal approaches to these developments. This study evaluates how municipalities can facilitate and balance self-organized urban renewal initiatives with top-down planning by analyzing these strategies.

These findings enhance decision-making processes and assessments, contributing to discussions and theories on municipal intervention and cooperation in self-organized urban initiatives. They will also form a framework for the municipality of Zwolle to navigate complex urban renewal strategies and contribute to academic debates on participatory urban governance, institutional collaboration strategies, and sustainable neighborhood transformations.

1.4 Scientific Relevance

This research contributes knowledge to the academic discourse on urban redevelopment, participatory governance, and sustainable spatial planning. By integrating insights from academic theory, this research will build upon existing theories while addressing the knowledge gaps in municipal decision-making regarding post-war, physically degraded neighborhoods. Municipal strategies for engaging marginalized groups and balancing governance with community-driven initiatives have been widely studied. However, the effectiveness seems underexplored (Benford & Snow, 2000; Horlings, 2017). Studies on top-down planning approaches are more common than those on bottom-up participatory approaches. Over the past few years, the bottom-up approach has received more attention in urban planning (Schively, 2007; Uittenbroek et al., 2019).

Recently, researchers have started to fill these knowledge gaps. For example, Polgár and Carton (2024) highlighted how the integration of local knowledge can strengthen participatory processes, and Carton and Ache (2017) emphasized the importance of building trust in participation between the government and a citizen initiative.

Tonkens and Verhoeven (2018) emphasize the risk of overrepresenting privileged groups in participatory processes and recommend a framework like CLEAR (Lowndes et al., 2006) to improve inclusivity.

Frameworks exist to structure participation approaches, but implementing them is often complicated because of institutional constraints, communication barriers, and a lack of incentive mechanisms (Fors et al., 2021). These obstacles in designing governance strategies ensure the active and meaningful involvement of diverse stakeholders rather than reinforcing existing inequalities (Raynor et al., 2018).

2. Theoretical Framework

This second chapter provides the theoretical foundation and its role in this research. Key frameworks and concepts related to urban renewal in post-war physically degraded neighborhoods and municipal strategies will be explored. By integrating theories, this chapter helps structure the research, providing insights into the broad welfare approach, public participation, public-private partnerships, financial aspects of urban renewal, relevant policy instruments, and transformative governance. Combining these theoretical insights creates a conceptual framework for analyzing municipal strategies for urban renewal projects, providing a foundation to guide municipalities in their decision-making processes.

2.1 Governance Strategies for Dealing with Local Initiatives

This section introduces the theoretical perspectives on how municipalities can engage with local initiatives. It focuses on the roles of public participation and public-private partnerships as governance strategies for stimulating local urban renewal initiatives.

2.1.1 Public Participation

This section discusses the importance of public participation in urban planning and the factors influencing its effectiveness. Public participation is a critical component in decision-making processes, particularly in urban planning and neighborhood transformations, where the involvement of individuals, communities, and stakeholders in shaping policies and projects that affect their environment is vital. Effective public participation creates inclusivity, transparency, and legitimacy in governance, fostering trust between institutions and citizens and creating spatial justice. However, the extent and quality of public participation depend on factors such as social-economic barriers, political implications, and the willingness of both institutions and citizens to participate. Understanding these foundational aspects of participation highlights why it is important for guiding local urban initiatives in this research.

Several theoretical frameworks structure public participation and provide insights into improvement. Lowndes et al. (2006) describe the CLEAR framework, which identifies five key conditions for successful public participation. CLEAR is an acronym for Can, Like, Enabled, Asked, and Responded to. “Can” is used to identify the skills and resources needed to participate. “Like” is about the reason for the public participation caused by shared cultural understanding, which relates to the Degree of Resonance, a variable feature of the collective action frame by Benford and Snow (2000). “Enabled” refers to the infrastructure that provides opportunities to participate. “Asked” is the condition of the mobilization, where participation is encouraged. And last, “Responded to” shows that suggestions must be considered. Otherwise, participants lose interest and trust, affecting their willingness to participate.

Public participation in urban planning has different forms, from collaborative planning to passive consultations. Raynor et al. (2018) describe three approaches: collaborative planning, transition management, and design thinking. Collaborative planning ensures inclusivity and representation, while transition management tests small-scale interventions before scaling up (Geels, 2011; Geels & Schot, 2007). Design thinking is a more user-centered, co-creative process. These approaches enhance representation and trust in governance. Public participation also faces barriers for marginalized groups. Fors et al. (2021) identified these barriers as key obstacles: resource constraints, language barriers, and rigid participation models. To enhance inclusivity, policymakers must adopt multilingual communication, flexible outreach strategies, and

accessible platforms where necessary. In order to strengthen participation, it is important to create trust in the participation strategy between a government and a citizen initiative (Carton & Ache, 2017).

The engagement of municipalities can often be seen in three roles: director, facilitator, and distancing. In the director role, the municipality takes control and participates in the initiative through financing or acquiring properties. In the role of the facilitator, the municipality mainly supports the initiative by brokering resources, offering procedural support, and adjusting processes. The distancing role resembles the day-to-day oversights safeguarding legality and equity. Poulsen (2007) described archaeological layers of the Danish civil servants, which correspond with these three roles. The bureaucratic layer consists of political advising, where the municipality would keep oversight to guarantee equal treatment, in line with the distancing role. The facilitator role is similar to the technocrat and negotiator roles, which are oriented to accountancy, negotiating, and consensus-seeking. Another layer is the political adviser, meta-governor, and policy maker, where the municipality emphasises creativity and inventiveness to frame strategies, aligning actors and learning from inventions, which corresponds closely to the director role.

In De Hogenkamp, public and municipal participation play crucial roles, especially because the ambition for urban renewal is coming from a self-organized initiative. Public and municipal participation ensures that urban renewal outcomes align with social, economic, political, and environmental needs. Approaches like collaborative planning can improve participation by fostering trust and inclusivity. Assessing these participation barriers will be essential for effective municipal engagement and responding to local needs in De Hogenkamp.

2.1.2 Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships in urban renewal projects have become a key instrument, facilitating collaboration between governmental bodies and private actors. In the comparison of Dutch and Spanish public-private partnerships, van Boxmeer and van Beckhoven (2005) emphasize the importance of balance in power dynamics and visions for successful urban renewal projects. The research suggests a consensus on the goals of urban renewal projects to reach the common goal and not pursue individual goals, which is essential to ensure a successful project (van Boxmeer & van Beckhoven, 2005). Codecasa and Ponzini (2011) analyze the effectiveness of urban renewal projects in Italy using public-private partnerships. They argue that public-private partnerships often suffer from a lack of strategic direction and public capacity. Even in favorable conditions, the partnerships may struggle to deliver innovative solutions or a private actor's long-term commitment to a project (Codecasa & Ponzini, 2011). The dynamics of the relations in public-private partnerships in urban development are explored by Vandenbussche (2018), who emphasizes the evolution of partnerships. The research suggests “a quest for unity” is required instead of simply seeking consensus in collaborative planning (Vandenbussche, 2018)

These studies emphasize that public-private partnerships for urban renewal projects are promising, but they rely on strategic governance, stakeholder alignment, and managing complex (evolving) collaborations. Balancing municipal control and the role of the private sector is vital to ensuring long-term commitments and the success of urban renewal initiatives. De Hogenkamp requires well-structured public-private participation, supporting municipal oversight, and private investments to ensure equality in this complex urban renewal project.

2.1.3 Experimental Governance Strategies (Pilot Projects)

Pilot projects have been seen as an experimental form of governance, which provides a way for public authorities to test new policies and technologies in a real-world setting. These pilot projects can be seen as governance experiments to explore innovative solutions. Bulkeley and Castán Broto (2013) frame these interventions as experiments to capture their uncertain, trial-and-error nature. Pilot projects are inherently about testing innovations, establishing best practices, and gaining experience and knowledge to apply to broader policy goals (Bulkeley & Castán Broto, 2013).

The general aim of a pilot is to test or develop new solutions for complex problems before committing to a full-scale implementation (Van Winden & Van den Buuse, 2017). Pilots typically operate within a fixed duration, with a dedicated budget, project team, and specific objective, which differentiates them from other programs. Pilot projects have become key instruments in contemporary governance strategies by opening up decision-making to experimentation and local innovation (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2021). Pilot projects often have partnerships across governmental departments, private firms, academia, and civil society, resulting in a multi-actor approach to innovation (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2021). This allows governments to orchestrate innovation outside of their institutional routines, thus experimenting with governance strategies.

Pilot projects are treated as experiments with a central purpose of learning. They function as a way to experiment with policy and technology to reveal what works and what does not in real-world scenarios. This creates an evidence-based way of policy-making, by testing new initiatives and refining them before scaling them up (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2021). Experimental governance not only stresses local learning within the pilot project but also scaling up and transferring the lessons learned to other contexts, contributing to long-term changes.

One concern about pilot projects is how and whether temporary pilot initiatives can be translated into permanent solutions. The pilots generate new knowledge and ideas, but organizations often struggle to translate these short-term experiments into long-term applications (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2021). Many pilots remain isolated demonstrations and fade out after the pilot stage without ever scaling up into lasting solutions (Van Winden & Van den Buuse, 2017).

There are documented cases where pilot experiments have influenced mainstream policy. Bavnæk and Thuesen (2025) describe a municipal pilot project in Denmark that developed new methods for village planning. The national planning authority acknowledged this and recommended this pilot methodology as an inspiration for municipalities in Denmark. This example illustrates that pilot projects can serve as promoters for institutional innovation and change.

In summary, pilot projects represent a strategy of experimental governance. This is characterized by its temporality, innovation, learning, and reflexivity. These pilots allow governments to govern by experiment and tackle problems through trials and adjustments rather than relying solely on top-down planning. On the other hand, pilot projects also raise critical considerations about how to ensure that these experiments lead to meaningful, long-term transformations rather than isolated successes. Under the right conditions, pilots can embed new practices and norms into existing systems, thus breaking path-dependencies and driving institutional change.

2.2 Transformative Governance Capacities for Local Government

This section introduces the concept of transformative governance theory to understand how municipalities can manage complex urban renewal challenges within their own organisation. It highlights how the municipality can move beyond traditional planning and break free of path dependencies to embrace experimentation, innovation, and cross-sector collaboration. By defining key governance capacities, municipalities can assess whether they can effectively enable long-term, systematic change essential for sustainable urban renewal projects, such as De Hogenkamp.

2.2.1 Transformative Governance

Municipal practice highlights that transformative governance is driven by visionary leadership and a clear framing of change. In the initial phase of transformative experiments, it is crucial for the municipality to act as a promoter. VanHoose and Bertolini (2023) describe the role of the promoter as valuable for initiating and legitimizing radically new and potentially controversial experiments. According to Hölscher et al. (2019), transformative governance entails altering the dominant discourse by actively developing a new vision that challenges existing norms, goals, and beliefs.

In this context, Bryson (1988) argues for an approach that focuses on achieving a series of “small-wins” rather than aiming for immediate large-scale “big-wins”. Focusing on smaller, more feasible successes, municipalities can reduce risks and strengthen their learning capacity. These “small-wins” can serve as practical demonstrations of the new vision, shifting the dominant discourse over time. Through the cumulative impact of “small-wins,” a contribution is made to embedding new norms and expectations, also supporting the role as a promoter and enabler of transformative change.

Another critical dimension of transformative governance is the commitment to treating projects as experiments rather than finalized products, where the objective is not immediate success but to take calculated risks to discover what works and what does not (Potjer, 2019). For genuine learning to occur, experiments must be explicitly supported by leadership, creating an organizational space that allows for deviation from existing policies and norms, tolerates mistakes, and accepts the cost of lessons learned. This “trial-and-error” space is part of the process. Potjer and Hajer (2021) describe this as “a winding path from possible, to feasible, to mainstream innovation”. They advocate for an approach in which various departments and external partners work together towards a shared mission, thus demanding new forms of collaboration and experimentation across sectors. Termeer et al. (2017) acknowledge “Institutional freezing” as a significant risk with outdated rules, formats, and budgets conflicting with innovation. Sustainable, transformative change depends on systematically capturing and applying lessons learned from experiments and trials. According to Termeer et al. (2017), knowledge sharing is a significant and essential aspect that should not be incidental, but rather embedded in organizational practice.

Transformative governance seeks to intentionally reorient systems to address complex challenges, including climate change. This means that objectives are no longer isolated, but are integrated within the need for radical and structural changes to maintain environmental integrity, social equity, human well-being, and economic feasibility in the long term (Hölscher et al., 2019, p. 844). Prevailing institutions with ambitious climate agendas, climate policy, and planning initiatives are often add-ons to short-term and optimisation-focused mainstream policies and practices, which do not fundamentally question existing behaviours and interests, making them

part of the problem (Hölscher et al., 2019). Transformative governance entails a reconfiguration of governance structures and processes themselves, supporting long-term, sustainable futures.

Drawing on transition management theory and empirical insights, Hölscher et al. (2019) identify four critical governance capacities that explain and evaluate the types of governance conditions created, as well as their contribution to transformative governance. These governance capacities include: stewarding capacity, unlocking capacity, transformative capacity, and orchestrating capacity.

Stewarding capacity refers to the ability of governance systems to reflect, learn, and adapt in uncertain situations. Processes that involve anticipation, monitoring, evaluation, and learning help actors manage long-term change, uncertainty, and high-risk situations (Hölscher et al., 2019). This capacity also encompasses the willingness and institutional flexibility to adjust goals and strategies in response to changing circumstances. Stewarding capacity means having the mindset and skill to deal with unexpected challenges, learn from them, and adapt to protect the future. Potjer and Hajer (2021) argue that “trial-and-error” space is essential for the government to experiment and learn as part of the outcome of any initiative.

Unlocking capacity focuses on the ability to disrupt existing, unsustainable regimes and create space for alternative practices and innovations to emerge, thereby enabling people, organizations, or systems to take effective action and bring about positive change (Hölscher et al., 2019). Having the right environment to enable recognizing and dismantling path dependencies and maladaptation is essential to break free from deeply rooted habits and systems. This requires giving space in institutional routines to allow flexibility, making experimentation with new approaches possible (Potjer & Hajer, 2021).

Transformative capacity refers to the ability to create system-changing innovations, such as new ways of thinking, acting, and organizing, that improve sustainability and resilience. This includes the embedding of these novelties in structures, practices, and discourse (Hölscher et al., 2019). To enable transformative capacity, the freedom and support to experiment, as well as resources and networks to share knowledge, are essential. These innovations become transformative when results are connected to institutional learning and implemented in the institutional system itself (Potjer, 2019).

Orchestrating capacity refers to the ability to coordinate and align diverse actors, perspectives, and policy domains around shared transformation goals, thereby enabling collaboration and managing trade-offs. It builds on inclusive participation, joint visioning, and knowledge co-production. Mediating across diverse scales and sectors, with formal and informal structures, spaces, and communication, creates synergies between different domains, such as energy, housing, transportation, and spatial planning (Hölscher et al., 2019). This results in the alignment of strategies, the sharing of knowledge, the resolution of disagreements, and the ability to turn plans into reality. According to Potjer (2019), innovations can be transformed into new mainstream by connecting individual experiments with institutions across levels to enable broader system learning and reinforce shared knowledge. Westskog et al. (2022) emphasize that local governments play a critical coordinating role by aligning policy frameworks, funding streams, initiatives, and stakeholders. This includes identifying, linking, and directing subsidies and resources.

Similar to the four critical governance capacities, Asadzadeh et al. (2023) developed four transformative resilience characteristics based on their bibliometric analysis and workshop process. The concept of transformative resilience involves actively adapting and changing in ways

that make cities more just, sustainable, and capable of handling future disruptions. While the governance capacities by Hölscher et al. (2019) explain and evaluate the governance conditions and whether they contribute to transformative governance, the transformative resilience characteristics by Asadzadeh et al. (2023) are designed to define the extent of change required and to clarify how this change occurs.

Asadzadeh et al. (2023) identified *foresight and path-shifting*, *collaboration and leadership*, *creativity and agility*, and *experimentation and embeddedness* as four core attributes of resilience. *Foresight and Path-Shifting* directly align with the *Stewarding Capacity* by emphasizing the need to anticipate long-term systemic risks and reorient development trajectories toward sustainability (Asadzadeh et al., 2023; Hölscher et al., 2019). This capacity aligns with the emphasis put on vision-building and redirection through small wins by Bryson (1988), which together shift the dominant discourse and institutional expectations. *Collaboration and Leadership* reinforce the *Orchestrating* and *Unlocking Capacities* by incentivizing diverse stakeholders across levels, in line with the emphasis on multi-actor leadership from Termeer et al. (2017) (Asadzadeh et al., 2023; Hölscher et al., 2019). *Creativity and Agility* are closely connected to *Transformative Capacity* because they help organizations respond flexibly and inventively in complex or uncertain situations (Asadzadeh et al., 2023; Hölscher et al., 2019). This reflects the experimental logic of Potjer (2019) and Potjer and Hajer (2021), where innovation is a learning process that involves experimentation as the path toward sustainable solutions. Finally, *Experimentation and Embeddedness* reinforce the *Orchestrating* and *Stewarding Capacities* by connecting learning to memory and systemic change (Asadzadeh et al., 2023; Hölscher et al., 2019).

Together, these resilience characteristics empower the transformative governance framework by reinforcing that sustainable transitions require a procedural shift toward future-oriented, networked, adaptive, and embedded forms of action. This is supported by the development of interconnected capacities, such as *foresight, innovation, learning, and collaboration*, which enable governance actors to anticipate change, generate new ideas, share knowledge, and work across boundaries. Transformative governance depends on the strength of these interconnected capacities, which enable institutions to safeguard experimentation and navigate disruption. By embedding experimentation and learning at multiple levels, institutions can evolve to approach complex challenges, improving the sustainability of governance itself. The municipality of Zwolle can examine its transformative governance capacities to assess its “readiness” to lead adaptive, inclusive, and innovative change and build institutional learning and resilience to support future sustainable development.

2.3 Policy Instruments for Stimulating Urban Renewal

This section outlines the planning, legal, and financial instruments available to municipalities in the Netherlands, illustrating how they can facilitate, fund, and regulate urban renewal projects, such as De Hogenkamp. It distinguishes between general policy instruments and specific financial aspects that shape feasibility and can be used to facilitate or guide the urban renewal project.

2.3.1 Brief Inventory of Relevant Policy Instruments

Dutch municipalities utilize various instruments to implement urban renewal strategies, encompassing spatial planning tools, financial mechanisms, and legal rights. These instruments

are crucial to shaping urban renewal projects and vary from spatial planning tools to financial mechanisms and legal rights.

Beekman and Rikhof (1994) highlight the shift towards strategic urban planning, a new approach to gaining a stronger and more flexible grip on urban transformation. Municipalities use spatial planning tools to authorize urban growth plans like rooftop extensions to manage spatial development effectively. Strategic urban plans consider urban management levels that recognize public and private initiatives.

Korthals Altes (2002) discusses the decentralization of urban regeneration policies in the Netherlands. The Investment Budget for Urban Regeneration (IUR) combines multiple funding streams into a single grant system. This grant system provides local governments with financial resources for renewal projects. The effectiveness of these policies depends on how the municipalities align national funds with local needs. Financial mechanisms such as subsidies for energy transitions or sustainability, grants, and the Investment Budget for Urban Renewal are all instruments municipalities can use to support urban renewal projects. Dutch municipalities can participate directly in urban renewal projects by buying properties, redesigning and servicing them, and reselling them to market parties and housing associations (Korthals Altes, 2002).

Local governments have legal authority over planning, allowing them to control land use, coordinate land development, and set developer requirements. Louw (2008) describes land policy instruments that municipalities can use to authorize urban renewal projects. Pre-emption rights, land readjustment, and compulsory purchase (often seen as a last resort) are instruments that municipalities use to improve the effectiveness and success of urban renewal projects (Louw, 2008).

Public land assembly and development is another instrument that can proactively acquire and manage land, which gives three significant advantages described by Louw et al. (2003). Cost recovery and value capture are simplified, which allows for strategic land release. This increases revenues by integrating public utilities, infrastructure, and public spaces into the project. It also allows municipalities to impose additional obligations on a land purchaser, which otherwise would be unenforceable through building or planning regulations.

Additionally, the municipality can use public land assembly to gain control over the development process, allocate land to stakeholders, and influence the building programs and sequence, allowing it to ensure a more effective coordination and implementation of urban development goals.

These sources help to understand the various methods the municipality of Zwolle can use to implement urban renewal strategies in De Hogenkamp. Spatial planning tools, financial mechanisms, legal rights, and municipal participation are instruments that can help navigate the complexities of urban renewal. Spatial planning tools, such as the proposed rooftop extension in De Hogenkamp, can facilitate urban growth to fund urban renewal. Financial instruments such as tax increment financing, sustainability or energy subsidies, and the Investment Budget for Urban Renewal provide financial support to enhance the feasibility of urban renewal in De Hogenkamp. Policies like pre-emption rights, land readjustment, and strategic land release can guide urban renewal while aligning with municipal goals and objectives.

2.3.2 Financial Aspects of Urban Renewal

Financing urban renewal projects often requires structured financial mechanisms, incentives, and stakeholder collaboration. Municipalities have a crucial role in facilitating financial arrangements, particularly in projects involving homeowner associations and private stakeholders.

Cheng and Guo (2021) highlighted how municipalities transfer financial responsibilities to homeowner associations, which affects local budgets. The municipalities provide financial incentives or support mechanisms, impacting the feasibility of urban renewal projects. Urban renewal projects still face significant challenges due to high costs and uncertain return on investments, and the future. A diverse mix of funding mechanisms is essential for ensuring urban renewal success. These funding mechanisms include public subsidies, private investments, and innovative financial instruments. Adair et al. (2000) state that structuring finance in urban regeneration projects is vital in determining viability. Emphasis is put on increasing reliance on public-private partnerships and private sector financing in urban renewal projects, as private investors often tend to avoid these projects with uncertain returns. Governments can stimulate investment through tax incentives, grants, and policy mechanisms that reduce risks in urban renewal projects (Adair et al., 2000).

A multi-layered approach, including public subsidies, private investments, and innovative funding tools, seems necessary to make financing urban renewal projects feasible. Tax Increment Financing is an innovative funding tool that allows municipalities to fund urban renewal projects through future tax revenue on property values, attracting private sector investment. The municipalities can use financial instruments, strategic partnerships, and risk-mitigation policies to develop a framework for urban renewal projects that aligns with social and environmental objectives.

The redevelopment of De Hogenkamp depends on financial mechanisms since the homeowner associations face financial shortages. The Social Return on Investment model helps assess the economic and social benefits of the urban renewal of De Hogenkamp without considering the direct financial gain. Tax Increment Financing could provide alternative funding solutions, reducing financial risks for homeowner associations, ensuring long-term municipal collaboration, and ensuring project feasibility and future-proof sustainable development. These financial aspects are critical for assessing how proposed renewal strategies can be realistically funded and managed over time.

2.4 Criteria for Weighing Governance Strategies

This section explains the broad welfare approach, which can be used as an evaluative framework to establish criteria for evaluating municipal strategies, thereby helping the research assess collaboration strategies based on theory and expert knowledge.

2.4.1 Broad Welfare Approach

Broad welfare (brede welvaart) is a concept that measures not only traditional economic prosperity but also incorporates social, ecological, and well-being aspects into policy making and development, evaluating society as a whole (Putters, 2024). The multidimensional nature of broad welfare is illustrated in frameworks such as the Broad Welfare Indicator (BWI), which integrates factors like good health, accessible education, social connections, personal fulfillment, leisure spending, and the quality and safety of the (living) environment (Thissen & Content, 2022, p. 22).

Integrating these factors ensures that policy interventions contribute to long-term societal resilience, avoiding short-term economic trade-offs. The concept of broad welfare also aligns with the “Friese Paradox”, where inhabitants of Friesland appear to be the happiest residents of the Netherlands, despite the province scoring low on economic indicators (Hospers & Janssen, 2021).

Raspe (2024) further elaborates on broad welfare as a compass for regional economic policy, emphasizing the need to balance economic growth with social and ecological sustainability. He argues that broad welfare should be an integral part of economic policy, influencing investment strategies, regional planning, and governance structures. The integration of broad welfare into urban development increases inclusivity and contributes to long-term social equity.

Rijpma et al. (2017) define the eleven dimensions of well-being, developing a well-being index for the Netherlands to measure beyond the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Their approach highlights these dimensions and selects specific variables, assigning a unique weight to each dimension. The key indicators of these dimensions include subjective well-being, health, work-life balance, education, housing, environment, safety, income, jobs, community, and civic engagement.

For the urban renewal in De Hogenkamp, the broad welfare approach offers valuable insights into how the outcomes, goals, and objectives of the municipal intervention can be evaluated, thereby improving the neighborhood's overall well-being. Implementing the broad welfare approach can help municipal strategies aim to enhance quality of life, social cohesion, and ecological sustainability, rather than focusing solely on economic benefits, ensuring a balance between economic feasibility and social and environmental sustainability. Decision-making processes can be enhanced by prioritizing long-term benefits over short-term economic efficiency, considering the broader welfare dimensions. In this research, the well-being dimensions and their weights can be utilized to evaluate the different municipal strategies and assess their impact. This approach to evaluating the strategies ensures that the urban renewal of De Hogenkamp aligns with broader societal goals.

2.4.2 Mission-Oriented Municipal Goals

Municipal public goals can be framed as measurable expressions of public values like climate mitigation and adaptation, housing availability and affordability, and neighborhood livability. Municipalities not only implement higher-level goals but also reshape them through multilevel and networked action, making agenda-setting, capacity building, and orchestration legitimate municipal aims (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2006). This implies criteria that test whether strategies deliver environmental performance (e.g., energy and emissions), social outcomes (e.g., equity, livability), and institutional legitimacy (e.g., participation, accountability), and whether they scale beyond a single project.

New innovative policy responses, including one-stop shops and integrated home renovation services that bundle technical, financial, and organizational support, target these barriers and can turn underlying willingness into feasible projects (Bertoldi et al., 2021; Elgendy et al., 2024). The evaluation of municipal strategies should include criteria for coordination capacity. The ability to reduce transaction costs through economies of scale, aligning owners and reassuring them that the project will go through, and ensuring distributive fairness on who bears risks and who benefits.

Mission-oriented (moonshot) policy offers a governance lens for aligning public goals with delivery in uncertain environments. Rather than funding isolated projects, mission-oriented approaches ask governments to set bold, time-bound, cross-sectoral problem definitions, and then manage experiments with learning for the purpose of public outcomes (Mazzucato, 2021). For assessment of municipal missions, these points refer to criteria that test the clarity of the mission through specificity and measurability, the balance of risk and strategic options, organizational flexibility to adapt bureaucratic bottlenecks, and the extent to which public action uses private capabilities and finance (Mazzucato, 2021).

These concepts offer a framework where preferred strategies are based on their capacity to advance the municipality's societal and environmental goals in line with transition responsibilities, resulting in a clear mission for a feasible experiment with a realistic option to scale it up.

2.5 Urban Renewal and Homeowner Associations

2.5.1 Urban Renewal of Post-War Neighborhoods

Urban renewal refers to a process that is aimed at transforming a city or neighborhood by improving the physical environment and infrastructure to enhance the overall quality of life (Maculan & Dal Moro, 2020). In the 1950s and 1960s, rapid construction of post-war neighborhoods was necessary to tackle the housing shortage in the Netherlands (Reinders, 2005). These neighborhoods are characterized by standardized building methods, limited architectural diversity, and a large concentration of social housing. Housing associations own a large percentage of these post-war neighborhoods, and are expected to invest in upgrading these physically degraded neighborhoods while also keeping rent low. This results in ownership transfers from housing associations to private ownership, leaving the private owners with the physically degraded apartments and thus the responsibility to invest, plan, and execute necessary maintenance or renovation (Priemus, 2006).

According to Priemus (2004), there has been an implementation gap in the Netherlands, which is well known by municipalities, where there is too much talk and not enough action in post-war neighborhoods. This implementation gap is linked to the complexity of coordinating multiple actors, negotiating with residents, and mobilizing sufficient financial resources to achieve a neighborhood transformation. By reaching a consensus with the various parties involved, financial resources can be made available to achieve urban renewal (Priemus, 2004).

This illustrates that urban renewal of post-war neighborhoods, as seen in De Hogenkamp, is understood as a complex process that goes beyond the physical restructuring and requires careful consideration of how municipalities should approach these neighborhoods and their coordination.

2.5.2 Homeowner Associations and Fragmented Ownership

Homeowner associations in the Netherlands represent a collective of apartment and property owners, who are jointly responsible for the maintenance and improvements of the entire structure, sometimes including the surrounding area. This collective involves dividing real estate into distinct units. This is a type of ownership where individual units are owned and registered in the name of the homeowners, while the shared residential common areas are owned by all the homeowners collectively. In the Netherlands, it is mandatory that all apartment owners are members of the HoA. The HoA is obligated to hold a meeting once per year, set aside funds for

maintenance, and issue an annual financial statement. This fragmented nature of the Dutch homeowner associations creates common barriers that they face. These barriers include financial, legal, social, and technical barriers (Elgendy et al., 2024).

Financial barriers involve the high initial costs and funding challenges of renovations within homeowner associations. These costs include high upfront investments, difficulty collecting funds, and insufficient funding resources, causing a significant barrier to their undertaking necessary upgrades (Elgendy et al., 2024).

Social barriers relate to the collective decision-making nature of the homeowner associations. Achieving consensus among the homeowners slows down and complicates the decision-making processes. Poor communication, volunteer-led management, and concerns about construction disruptions can hinder initiatives and are all part of the social barriers (Elgendy et al., 2024).

Technical barriers involve the lack of expertise and knowledge needed for renovations. Older buildings may also have safety and structural challenges, which emphasize the need for specialized technical support and expertise (Elgendy et al., 2024).

The fragmented ownership structure is part of the legal barriers homeowner associations face (Elgendy et al., 2024). Fragmented property rights raise coordination costs and slow urban renewal (Adams et al., 2001). Homeowner associations also face collective actions and transaction cost problems, such as diverse preferences or plans, free riding, and demanding decision rules, which can cause even cost-effective renovations to stall unless there is guidance and facilitation.

Several municipalities are strengthening their capacity to accelerate and support homeowner associations in energy renovations by providing them with energy renovation advice, hosting energy renovation events, appointing energy advisors, and collaborating with external experts (Elgendy et al., 2024). These common barriers give insights into the complexity of homeowner association situations. They highlight the different factors that influence the decision-making process of homeowner associations in their fragmented ownership structure.

2.6 Conceptual Model and Operationalization

The conceptual framework links relevant theories on governance and the tools for strategic planning related to collaboration strategies, providing a structured approach to evaluate the unknown element of this research: the desired municipal collaboration strategy for urban renewal.

The framework is structured in three columns. The first column presents theoretical insights on policy instruments for stimulating urban renewal and criteria for weighing governance strategies, forming a toolbox for creating and assessing strategies that municipalities can utilize.

After a collaboration strategy is created and assessed, the second column provides governance theory, including participatory, experimental, and transformative governance, which is used to discover the transformative capacities of the municipality. This assessment is necessary to determine how the municipality must adapt and transform its internal organization to implement the collaboration strategy.

Together, these columns ensure that the relevant theory is linked to the objective of this study, the unknown, which is the desired municipal collaboration strategy for urban renewal, involving the urban renewal of fragmented ownership and dealing with self-organized citizen initiatives.

The research gains analytical clarity by organizing the conceptual model, ensuring that each theoretical concept serves a role in explaining how municipalities can make informed, theory-based decisions in designing and implementing effective collaboration strategies. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model in a visual representation.

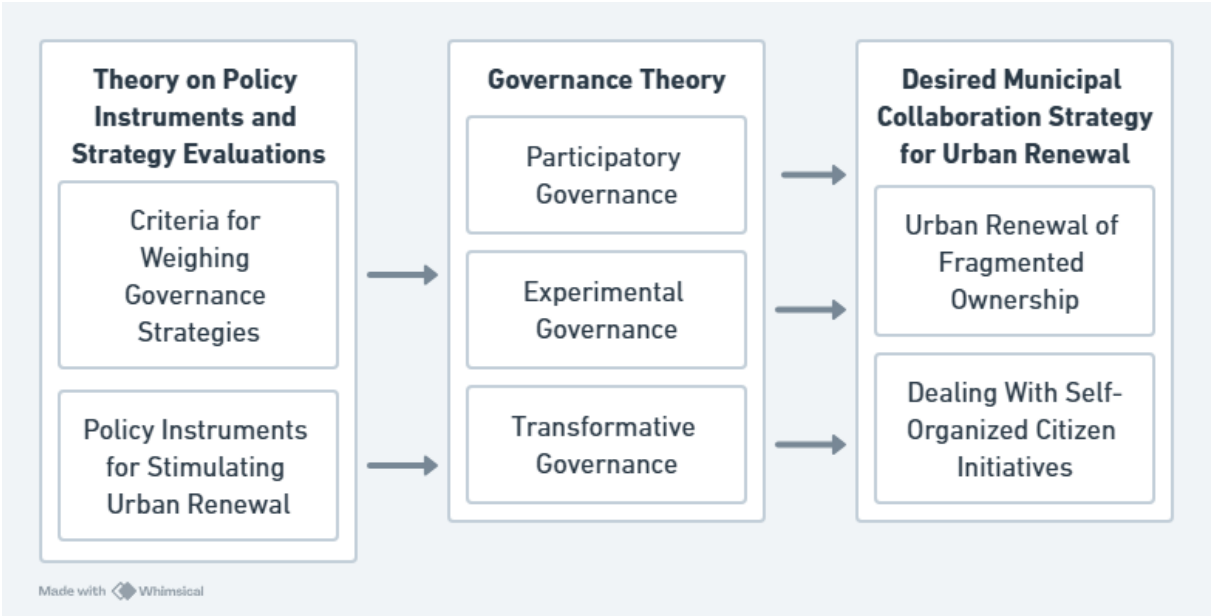


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology used in conducting this research. This includes the research design and method for the research questions. The validity and reliability of this research will also be discussed.

3.1 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative approach, focusing on the perspectives and interpretations of relevant actors involved in urban renewal projects. Given the complexity of urban renewal and governance, this study used a comparative case study methodology, combining interviews, workshops, desk research, and multi-criteria analysis to evaluate the municipal strategies, their impact, and how the municipality can internally transform (Duinker & Greig, 2007; Goodwin & Wright, 2001; Krehl & Weck, 2020; Montibeller et al., 2006; Romijn & Renes, 2013). Following the principles of action research, which integrates research with real-world practice, this study promotes collaboration and knowledge generation to improve decision-making processes in urban renewal projects centered on post-war physically degraded neighborhoods (Wood-Harper, 1985). This aligns with the research objective of understanding the strategies municipalities can implement for post-war physically degraded neighborhood transformations.

Employing qualitative, action-oriented, and comparative research enabled this study to achieve its goal of generating insights that guide municipalities in making effective and inclusive decisions about how to approach complex urban renewal situations involving self-organized initiatives.

3.2 Research Methods

Sub-study 1, Comparative Analysis of Municipal Strategies

This research was divided into two sub-studies. The first sub-study aimed to investigate how municipalities in the Netherlands approach challenges in post-war physically degraded neighborhoods and self-organized urban renewal initiatives. This was conducted through comparative case study research, data gathering via interviews with other municipalities, and a review of relevant literature on policies. According to Krehl and Weck (2020), in comparative case study research, the reasoning for selecting cases must be justified and reflected upon, as well as the objective of comparing these cases. The objective of this case study comparison is primarily a combination of the process, situation, and outcome (Krehl & Weck, 2020, p. 1869).

Data Collection

The data collection for sub-study 1 consists of document analysis and semi-structured interviews with municipalities in the Netherlands. Through document analysis and semi-structured interviews, available instruments are inventoried. The semi-structured interviews also gathered insights into the choices made by other municipalities when selecting specific instruments and their underlying reasoning. The interviews helped to assess how municipalities facilitate urban renewal in post-war physically degraded neighborhoods and how they support self-organized initiatives.

This sub-study serves as a foundation for designing collaboration strategies for the municipality of Zwolle by inventorying the approaches, policies, and tools used by other municipalities in similar cases.

Sub-study 2, Collaboration Strategy Design and Evaluation for Zwolle

The second sub-study employed the Delphi method to design and evaluate collaboration strategies for the municipality of Zwolle. Based on the outcome of the collaboration strategies, it can now be explored how the municipality can transform internally to facilitate and support the self-organized initiative of De Hogenkamp. Potential interventions in post-war physically degraded neighborhoods will be designed and evaluated. A workshop was conducted and followed up after using the Delphi method to create a feedback loop after evaluating the collaboration strategies (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

Phase 1, Strategy Assessment (Workshop 1)

In Phase 1 of Sub-study 2, collaboration strategies were developed by examining the case of De Hogenkamp and drawing on findings from Sub-study 1. A workshop was designed to evaluate five different strategies with the municipality of Zwolle, using approaches, policies, and tools employed by other municipalities in similar cases. In this workshop, participants from the municipality of Zwolle utilized their expertise to evaluate the collaboration strategies based on diverse criteria. Three types of municipal roles, corresponding with the archaeological layers of the Danish civil servants, were used in this workshop (Poulsen, 2007):

1. Director role (political adviser, meta-governor, and policy maker)
2. Facilitating role (technocrat and negotiator)
3. Distancing role (bureaucratic)

To assess the strengths and weaknesses of each collaboration strategy, a multi-criteria decision analysis was conducted in the workshop. Montibeller et al. (2006) demonstrated how MCDA can be effectively combined with strategy planning to evaluate options under conditions of uncertainty (Goodwin & Wright, 2001). These methods facilitate a structured evaluation of future strategies in light of the municipality of Zwolle's goals and objectives. By incorporating dimensions of the broad welfare approach and allowing participants to assign appropriate weights to each criterion, the preferred collaboration strategy can be determined. This allowed the municipality to make a well-informed, data-driven decision regarding the most suitable strategy. Duinker and Greig (2007, p. 207) emphasize that impact assessments inform decision-makers by addressing three key future-oriented questions: what may happen, what will most likely happen, and what would we prefer to happen?

Phase 2, Operationalizing Transformative Governance (Workshop 2)

In Phase 2 of Sub-study 2, a second workshop was organized with the municipality of Zwolle to evaluate how transformative governance principles could be applied to the self-organized initiative of Homeowner Associations of De Hogenkamp. This workshop was based on the preferred collaboration strategy from workshop 1. This phase focused on understanding the conditions under which that strategy could be successfully implemented within the municipality. Participants from the municipality of Zwolle reflected on critical aspects of transformative governance, as defined in the theoretical framework, and discussed the requirements, risks, and support structures necessary to implement long-term changes. Thematic components structured the discussion in the workshop, ranging from leadership and dominant discourse to cross-sector collaboration, orchestrating, and learning environments. The workshop was based on the four critical governance capacities of transformative governance identified by Hölscher et al. (2019): Stewarding capacity, unlocking capacity, transformative capacity, and orchestrating capacity. These capacities are paired with the resilience characteristics identified by Asadzadeh

et al. (2023): foresight and path-shifting, collaboration and leadership, creativity and agility, and experimentation and embeddedness.

Workshop 2 was designed as a self-reflective institutional evaluation, guiding participants through a structured discussion based on transformative governance literature, to determine what would be required to transition from a feasible collaboration strategy to a long-term neighborhood transformation. The outcomes provide valuable insights into how the municipality can enhance its transformative governance and experimental approach in De Hogenkamp and translate these lessons learned into long-term benefits.

In Figure 2, a visual representation of the sub-studies is shown.

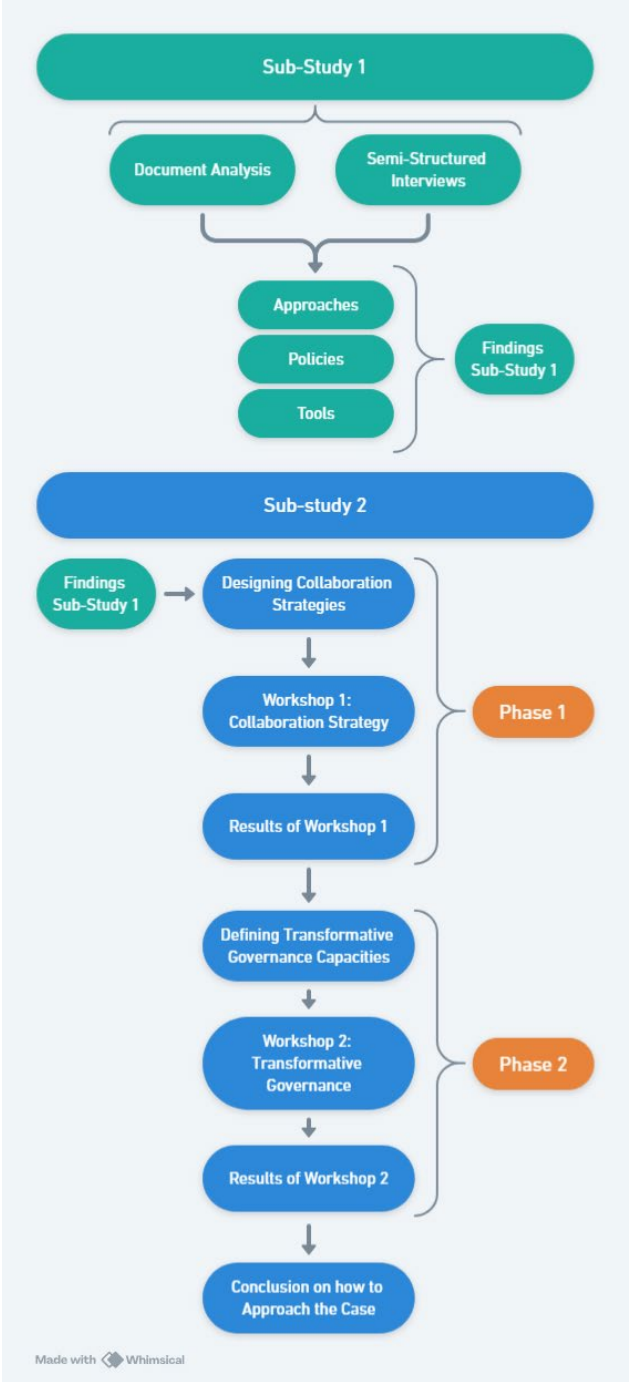


Figure 2: Visual representation of the sub-studies

3.3 Validity and Reliability of the Research

Validity can be ensured by aligning the methodology with the research aim to explore the possible strategic roles of the municipality of Zwolle in the neighborhood transformation of De Hogenkamp. Through qualitative methods, including case studies, interviews, and multi-criteria analysis, the research can capture the complexities of urban renewal governance and its social, economic, political, and spatial justice implications. This research improves the credibility of the findings by using policy documents, expert opinions, and empirical case studies.

The study's reliability is maintained through the consistent use of qualitative research methods to gather data. Semi-structured interviews with municipalities, experts, and stakeholders ensure consistency in data collection across different respondents. The criteria that are used to evaluate the collaboration strategies for the municipality of Zwolle are derived from the scientific “broad welfare” analytic framework, and the method for design and evaluation is conducted in transparent steps as prescribed by established techniques, such as the Delphi method, strategy analysis, and multi-criteria decision analysis .

This research is done in collaboration with the municipality of Zwolle. Hence, to prevent biases, all research steps, from data collection to analysis, will be thoroughly documented, ensuring transparency and reproducibility in future research. Because the research results are focused on a singular case study, the generalizability of the findings will be limited. By using relevant case studies from other municipalities in the Netherlands as input, the findings can be used by other municipalities dealing with similar post-war physically degraded neighborhoods and self-organized initiatives.

4. Results, Sub-Study 1: Municipal Approaches and Tools

The following section presents the findings from sub-study 1, including document analysis and information obtained through semi-structured interviews with municipalities in the Netherlands regarding homeowner associations. The list of interviewed municipalities is added in Appendix 1. The research aimed to uncover the various approaches municipalities take and the available tools and instruments for intervening in projects similar to De Hogenkamp.

4.1 Interview Subjects

For the first phase of this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees from various municipalities in the Netherlands. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insights into how other municipalities approach complex self-organized initiatives by homeowner associations, particularly in terms of how they manage and facilitate them. The semi-structured interviews were designed to explore strategic and practical dimensions of urban renewal projects. The guide was structured around three thematic clusters, with an additional section on the background of the interviewees. The first section focused on knowledge about similar cases of self-organized neighborhood initiatives that prioritize sustainability and urban renewal. The second section focused on the use of policy, financial, legal, and spatial planning instruments that allow municipalities to facilitate and support local initiatives. The last section involved collaboration and decision-making processes between municipalities and stakeholders, including residents, HoA boards, and developers. The interview guide is added in Appendix 2. The interviews aimed to identify which instruments were most effective, how barriers such as backlogs in maintenance were addressed, and how municipalities can manage preferential treatment. Insights gathered were used to create a collection of options for policy measures. This collection of policy measures will then serve in sub-study two as a pool of measures to choose from in the development of collaboration strategies for the municipality of Zwolle. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed, with strict adherence to maintaining anonymity.

4.2 Similar Cases and Municipal Approaches

This section examines how municipalities across the Netherlands have responded to comparable self-organized neighborhood initiatives, particularly those focused on sustainability and urban renewal. Using the first thematic cluster of the interview guide, the analysis focuses on experiences with similar cases to De Hogenkamp, including key opportunities and challenges that emerged. The findings highlight variations in municipal strategies, the roles of different actors, and the extent to which institutions and organizations influence outcomes. The aim is to understand how municipalities adopt a collaborative, enabling role in these projects. First, a brief overview is provided of pilot projects as an experimental strategy. This is followed by an examination of the toolkits for soft support, approaches to participatory governance, and options for municipalities to learn from one another, culminating in key insights.

4.2.1 Pilot-Based Approaches

Many Dutch municipalities have adopted pilot projects as a way to explore and refine their approach to HoA initiatives on neighborhood renewal. In Zwolle, the neighborhood of De Hogenkamp and its HoA initiative are being treated as a pilot case in their own right. De Hogenkamp is a typical post-war neighborhood, characterized by aging apartment complexes

and degraded public spaces. This pilot experiment with the idea of HoAs collectively adding value through constructing extra apartments to finance sustainable upgrades, resulting in a new approach to self-organized area development. The municipality of Zwolle recognizes this as a “*een dikke kans*” but also as a complex initiative that requires careful attention and facilitation. Before approving the plan, the municipality must assess the feasibility and impacts of the plan, highlighting the experimental nature of the initiative.

Other municipalities have orchestrated their own pilots to build experience with HoA support programs. Maastricht had not previously seen a collective HoA neighborhood initiative, but is now building experience through a pilot in two different neighborhoods. In these pilots, the municipality provides intensive guidance to participating HoAs as they transition to natural gas. The municipality describes process coaching as a key element, “*basically a kind of energy coach, but for the homeowner association*”. This coach will guide each HoA through the entire process of energy transition. Maastricht explained how the HoAs receive practical support from A to Z, starting with problem analysis and technical quickscans, and concluding with organizing the measures to be taken. This new approach is intended to lower the threshold for HoAs to act. By keeping the pilot in-house through a semi-public partner organization, Maastricht can bypass lengthy processes and maintain flexibility, where it can adjust the course as needed. These two pilots were chosen for their differences, where one has relatively modern HoAs in a nearly gas-free area. In contrast, the other has older, poorly insulated HoAs with an uncertain heating future. The purpose of this pilot is to understand how the support process operates across various contexts. As the municipality of Maastricht put it, “*It's great that we can actually try out all types of homeowner associations in that pilot*.” This pilot will build up practical knowledge on how to handle cases like De Hogenkamp in the future.

Smaller municipalities are also using pilots. In Assen, the municipality observed that until recently, few HoAs were actively pursuing sustainability, but interest has grown since around 2022. The city responded by starting a pilot with three adjacent HoA apartment complexes to undertake a joint energy-saving project. As the interviewee explained, “*It is a project involving three similar homeowner associations with whom we are conducting a pilot, a sustainability project for energy advice for the entire building*.” These apartment complexes are situated near a potential future district heating project, so the pilot also examines how they might connect to it. However, the final decisions rest with the HoA members. The pilot in Assen differs from the initiative in Zwolle because it focuses on improvements at the building level rather than a complete neighborhood transformation, and has no means to add extra apartments as a financial mechanism to fund renewal efforts. Still, the pilot signals a more proactive stance by the municipality to engage with willing HoAs and learn by doing.

Even larger municipalities are experimenting with pilots. Eindhoven has generally approached HoA sustainability on a city-wide programmatic level. However, the interviewee mentioned a notable case in Eindhoven-Zuid where seven HoAs jointly participate in a neighborhood improvement and energy project, similar to the case of De Hogenkamp. This project was selected due to its priority in this area and offered an opportunity to observe the collaboration of multiple HoAs working together. One reason for choosing this cluster of HoAs was the evident urgency and opportunity it presented, justifying the focus of resources on it. Similarly, Utrecht has taken a pilot-based step to ramp up its efforts. Last year, Utrecht started a pilot “*insulation approach for small HoAs*”, where they actively reached out to about 200 small associations in two neighborhoods to encourage insulation upgrades. The employees of the municipality went “*echt aan de deur*” to inform and recruit HoA owners for this initiative. Utrecht recently began scaling up to both small

and large HoAs across the city. This represents a shift toward a more proactive and area-focused strategy for engaging HoAs, shaped by insights gained from the pilot projects.

These pilot projects enable municipalities to develop and test methods on a manageable scale, gather test results, and refine their approaches before implementing them on a larger scale. It allows them to target the most urgent “priority” cases first, aligning with principles of spatial justice and distributive justice by concentrating efforts where degradation is most severe. Bavnbæk and Thuesen (2025, p. 2) describe different interpretations of spatial justice. Distributive justice can be seen as a service provision that directs resources to priority areas, while procedural justice has more emphasis on participatory and demand-driven approaches.

Pilot projects, often referred to as “smart city” projects, are established to test new technologies that help address urban sustainability issues, improve the effectiveness of urban services, and enhance the quality of life for citizens. Deploying internal knowledge transfer mechanisms enables organizations to effectively apply lessons learned from pilot projects, thereby enhancing their overall effectiveness. Pilot projects are typically run and supported by municipal authorities in collaboration with local communities, and are often funded through subsidies (Van Winden & Van den Buuse, 2017, pp. 51, 57). Local communities and municipalities often collaborate within pilots related to areas within their local jurisdiction, as funding institutions frequently mandate this collaboration for the allocation of funding (Mukhtar-Landgren, 2021, p. 1486). New forms of technological innovation can also be made operational through pilot projects, where they are experimented with in a real-world setting for the first time (Bulkeley & Castán Broto, 2013, p. 365). Finally, pilot projects can support various municipal goals such as developing methods, building trust with local communities, and proving concepts before scaling them up.

4.2.2 Soft Tools for HoA Support

Across the interviewed municipalities, soft instruments and support tools have emerged to assist HoAs in maintaining and sustainably upgrading their properties. These tools are “soft” in that they rely on advice, facilitation, and initiative rather than direct financial incentives, such as subsidies (which are covered in Section 4.2.3). A key instrument among these soft tools is “HoA desks”, a centralized helpdesk or information hub designed specifically for HoAs. Rotterdam acted early, establishing its HoA desk, “VVE-010,” in 2009 to tackle the extensive backlog of maintenance for its 13000 HoAs. This desk focuses on advising and “activating” HoAs in vulnerable neighborhoods, helping its owners plan maintenance to prevent further degradation. According to Rotterdam, the desk was created to ensure HoA inquiries did not get lost within the municipality: *“Then we started the HoA desk... a question posed by an HoA could end up anywhere in the organisation... now it's clear: one HoA desk.”* This centralisation has improved response time and consistency of support in Rotterdam. Utrecht followed a similar approach in 2018, when a central helpdesk for the HoA was established within the municipality. Utrecht has a small dedicated team that now serves as the precise point of contact for all HoA-related questions. They internally allocated the responsibility for HoA support, and Utrecht concentrated the assistance of HoAs into a single team, rather than distributing it across departments. Several other municipalities have or are developing HoA helpdesks. Delft has developed a new HoA program, which is supported by a HoA helpdesk and recurring “HoA cafés” where informal workshops are held, allowing HoA board members to learn and exchange experiences. Haarlemmermeer chose to make the energy desk more personal rather than just providing “a phone number and website” by outsourcing it to a local nature and environmental association, along with a dedicated foundation, which now serves as the public face of the municipal energy desk. The municipality also contracted several companies to provide technical expertise and to

offer concrete energy-saving measures. This energy desk hosts community information evenings to present available energy solutions and facilitate further support. They emphasize face-to-face interaction, aligning with their strategy of working in the community rather than from the office.

Another crucial soft tool is information provision and training. Many interviewees highlighted the knowledge gap among HoA members regarding technical, financial, and organizational aspects of renovations. Some HoA members do not even understand the concept of a HoA and mistakenly recognize them as housing associations. To bridge this, municipalities facilitate educational initiatives. Assen refers HoAs to resources like “VvE-Belang”, the national HoA association, which offers courses for board members, “*because it is almost a profession in itself*”. Similarly, Leiden organizes information evenings and invites expert speakers from organizations like “VvE-belang” to educate HoAs on best practices. These sessions cover how to set up maintenance plans, finance energy-saving measures, and navigate decision-making processes within HoAs. Utrecht also held neighborhood-based meetings where HoAs were specifically invited. At those events, the municipality presented the possibilities for sustainable and maintenance support, answered questions on the spot, and even allowed HoA boards to schedule follow-up one-on-one advice appointments. These interactive neighborhood-based meetings not only share knowledge but also indicate to HoAs that the municipality is available as a partner in the process. Beyond workshops, municipalities encourage HoAs to undertake professional planning. In Assen, many HoAs hire professional managers to handle technical and financial management. These managers help HoAs draft multi-year maintenance plans (MJOP’s) that integrate sustainability upgrades, ensuring that maintenance and investments are structured. The interviewee from the municipality of Assen illustrated that instead of repainting decaying window frames, a well-informed HoA might decide to replace all old frames with newer, insulated ones, resulting in a more sustainable and long-term solution. This decision requires technical and financial insights, which can be obtained through external expert guidance, facilitated by municipal connections with such expertise.

The need for process facilitation was recurring often in interviews with the municipalities. Gouda recently conducted research into their 750 HoAs and concluded that these associations “*often just need process guidance*”. To address this, Gouda is exploring the creation of a HoA platform for knowledge exchange called “*for and by HoAs*”. Here, experienced HoAs can share success stories and lessons with others. The idea is to fill the process guidance gap by leveraging learning from fellow HoAs on what works, what does not, and how to navigate challenges. The role of the municipality is to initiate and facilitate this platform, but not to lead it; “*this is for and by HoAs*”. This platform embodies a soft approach to empowering the community with knowledge and networks. The municipality of Enschede indicated it has, in some instances, engaged an external consultant to perform a “quick scan” of a deteriorating apartment complex and then talk with the HoA about next steps. This kind of outreach, where the city effectively brings in an expert to diagnose the building and initiate a conversation, serves as a motivation for passive HoAs to start considering renovations. Enschede recognizes this as a “mutual initiative”, where the municipality signals the problem and offers help, and the HoA must be willing to take action. This facilitation does not force HoAs to take action, but rather lays the groundwork for them to make informed decisions.

Some municipalities use group-oriented soft tools, such as organizing collective purchases or running incentivizing campaigns. Haarlemmermeer has had success with “collectieve inkoopacties” for insulation and solar panels. They directly approached residents in small neighborhood clusters with concrete offers (e.g., discounted roof insulation if a group signs up),

and they achieved small but meaningful wins. Haarlemmermeer explained that their personal approach and small-scale focus have led to these successes by approaching large areas, dividing them into smaller zones, and contacting homeowners individually. For HoAs, Haarlemmermeer also organized HoA-scans through their partner “Vverduurzamen”. A lot of HoAs took up these scans, some of which resulted in the installation of solar panels. The bigger challenge Haarlemmermeer recognizes is consistently following through on the phase where HoA members agree on major investments. These campaigns demonstrate that owners are willing to make improvements if they are relieved and supported financially and technically. The role of the municipality here is to package solutions in an attractive, low-effort manner, effectively marketing sustainability to residents who might not otherwise initiate it on their own.

Finally, given limited municipal capacity, prioritization itself is a soft strategy employed behind the scenes. Smaller municipalities, in particular, must decide where to allocate their time and assistance. The municipality of Assen acknowledges that *“if we receive requests from 50 homeowner associations simultaneously tomorrow, we will have a significant issue, as we simply do not have the capacity to handle it.”* Therefore, they quietly phase out their help and give priority to the most urgent cases. In Assen, the HoAs that are *“het verst op afstand”* in terms of maintenance or organization get the most intensive guidance. Phasing out their help quietly ensures that scarce staff time goes to the complexes in the worst condition or those least able to help themselves. These decisions are part of the soft governance toolkit, as they shape the focus of initiatives such as pilots or outreach campaigns. Leiden and other cities have designated certain priority neighborhoods for sustainability interventions, where the municipalities might concentrate extra attention on HoAs with poor energy performance.

In summary, Dutch municipalities deploy multiple soft tools, including one-stop helpdesks for HoAs, educational forums, process facilitators, knowledge platforms, proactive outreach and campaigns, and internal prioritization mechanisms. These soft tools are aimed at empowering HoAs and making it easier for them to organize and act. In one interview with the Municipality of Zwolle, the biggest task was described as: *“How can we just make it easier for them?”*. Through these soft interventions, municipalities try to lower knowledge barriers, build capacity, and stimulate initiatives, ultimately empowering action led by HoA initiatives.

4.3 Municipal Instruments, Tools, and Structures

Financial instruments play a fundamental role in enabling homeowner associations to undertake self-organized urban renewal in post-war physically degraded neighborhoods. Municipalities often act as intermediaries, connecting HoAs with national funding programs and supplementing these with local instruments to finance sustainability upgrades and maintenance. The 12 interviews revealed a common strategy of first leveraging national schemes, then filling gaps with municipal measures. This section examines how national financial instruments are utilized, what innovative local tools municipalities have developed, what environmental and spatial framework instruments municipalities use, and different types of ownership structures applied by municipalities.

4.3.1 Use of National and European Financial Instruments

Municipalities rely heavily on national funding programs to support HoAs' sustainability and renewal projects. Maastricht noted that European subsidies for innovation, cooperation, and climate goals are available but difficult to obtain because they require considerable effort. A core approach is to act as a conduit for national subsidies and loans, bringing outside resources into

local projects. Eindhoven accessed the National Housing Fund for Vulnerable Neighborhoods (Volkshuisvestingsfonds) to finance improvements in aging apartment complexes. The city used this national fund to pay for both physical measures and hiring process support for the HoA, effectively passing the subsidy to the residents. Similarly, in Leiden, it was noted that the municipal sustainability loans are essentially all backed by the National Housing Fund for Vulnerable Neighborhoods, *“one and the same scheme.”* This highlights that what appear to be local loans in fact rely on national funds, with the municipality changing conditions like interest rate, term, and eligible measures to fit local needs.

Another national program is the “Nationaal Isolatieprogramma (NIP), which is a subsidy program for home insulation. Multiple municipalities successfully used NIP funds through a specific grant known as SPUK for local insulation actions. Utrecht received *“millions of euros”* through NIP to set up a local insulation program, targeting both individual homeowners and HoAs. Haarlemmermeer and Maastricht likewise launched insulation initiatives funded by the NIP. Haarlemmermeer began a “Lokale Aanpak Isolatie” in 2025 using an SPUK grant so that residents could apply for subsidized floor or window insulation. Maastricht diverted its first NIP funding to owner-occupied houses and plans to dedicate the second part explicitly to HoAs in pilot neighborhoods, to insulate apartment buildings collectively.

Cities often rely on a mix of national subsidies and loans. Virtually all municipalities encourage HoAs to tap the Nationaal Warmtefonds for low-interest loans. Multiple officials praised the Warmtefonds as a crucial tool enabling HoAs to finance measures like insulation or heat pumps over time. The experience of Delft highlights that the Warmtefonds has evolved to address equity concerns. *“For a number of years, it has had good loans for HoAs... they even provide 0% loans for members who cannot pay”*. Such provisions help prevent less affluent owners from participating in collective improvements by ensuring they can afford their share. National grants like the SVVE subsidy have also been widely used in cities like Rotterdam, Eindhoven, Utrecht, Zwolle, Delft, and Enschede. HoAs have successfully applied for this subsidy to cover part of the costs of energy-saving renovations, with municipalities playing a supporting role in informing and assisting applicants. The SVVE is a direct national subsidy towards HoAs since municipalities do not control its disbursement. Local governments still serve a facilitating function, to make HoAs aware of it. Eindhoven would point HoAs to the SVVE, but otherwise stays outside of that process.

Beyond the dedicated housing programs, general sustainability subsidies form part of the financial mix. The ISDE (Investeringssubsidie Duurzame Energie) is a national scheme that provides grants for measures like heat pumps, solar panels, and insulation. In practice, municipalities such as Enschede, Leiden, and Maastricht include the ISDE in their toolkit by guiding residents and HoAs to apply. Enschede mentioned the ISDE as an important support that should not be overlooked. Individual homeowners typically use the ISDE, while some HoAs have used it for collective installations like solar panels, and municipalities consider it part of the group of available incentives.

A common strategy of municipalities is often to combine multiple funds to maximize impact. Utrecht exemplifies this by promoting all national schemes and then combining them. *“We deploy all means available nationally... we promote them and if needed, we top up with local subsidies or loans”*. Utrecht attempts to layer subsidies so that an HoA can simultaneously use a national insulation subsidy and a municipal incentive, which reduces the financial burden of the HoA. This approach of blending funds is used by other municipalities. In Rotterdam, the municipality took national energy-poverty grant money and created a “Rotterdamse isolatiesubsidie” for HoAs. This local insulation subsidy was entirely financed by two national SPUK grants, one for energy-poor

households and one for insulation. The “Rotterdamse isolatiesubsidie” is an example of the municipality strategically combining national funds to maximize impact and meet local needs.

Finally, national support for broader neighborhood renewal and energy transition pilots also benefits HoAs. The case in Asses, where its pilot with three HoAs going gas-free received national support as part of the “Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken” (PAW) program, shows why national support benefits HoAs. Enschede and Maastricht have been preparing area-based approaches with the help of national funds for district heating and transition planning. These programs underscore that national instruments are not limited to individual subsidies or loans but also include area-based grants that municipalities can secure to facilitate collective projects, which often involve multiple HoAs in a neighborhood.

In summary, the national level provides a substantial financial backbone for urban renewal in post-war physically degraded neighborhoods. Utrecht noted that with constrained local budgets, the municipality first has to ask “*what is available nationally and do we need to add something?*”. Table 1 summarizes the results of European and National Financial Instruments and the municipalities using them.

Financial Instruments (European & National)		
Instrument	Description	Municipalities (Named/Applied)
European Subsidies	Subsidies for innovation, cooperation, and climate goals	Maastricht
Volkshuisvestingsfonds (Housing Fund for Vulnerable Neighborhoods)	Grants or loans to municipalities for upgrading vulnerable post-war neighborhoods	Eindhoven, Delft, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Assen, Maastricht
National Insulation Program (NIP) or Specific Grant Local Approach Insulation (SPUK-LAI)	National subsidies for home insulation measures, allocated to municipalities (SPUK) to implement local insulation campaigns (including some DIY measures)	Eindhoven, Rotterdam, Maastricht, Assen, Haarlemmermeer, Leiden, Enschede, Utrecht
ISDE Subsidy (Investeringssubsidie Duurzame Energie)	Subsidy for sustainable energy and energy-saving measures like heat pumps, solar boilers, and insulation	Maastricht, Enschede, Leiden, Utrecht
Subsidy for Sustainability of Homeowner Associations (SVVE)	National subsidy specifically for HoAs to implement energy-saving renovations, covering a portion of costs (e.g., insulation, solar panels)	Enschede, Zwolle, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Delft, Eindhoven
Nationaal Warmtefonds (Heat Fund – Energy Savings Loan)	Low-interest loan fund accessible to homeowners and HoAs for financing sustainability measures	Enschede, Delft, Rotterdam, Utrecht
Loan for Deferred Maintenance (via Nationaal Warmtefonds)	National loan for renovation/maintenance (Housing Stimulation Fund)	Delft, Maastricht, Utrecht
Proeftuin Aardgasvrije Wijken (PAW) (Natural Gas-Free Neighborhood Pilot)	National program funding municipal pilots to transition neighborhoods off natural gas (often via district heating or all-electric solutions)	Assen, Enschede, Delft, Leiden, Maastricht

Table 1: European and National Financial Instruments

4.3.2 Use of Local Financial Instruments

While national programs are indispensable, municipalities often find they must introduce local financial instruments or tailor-made incentives to address gaps and catalyze homeowner action. All twelve municipalities have, to varying degrees, deployed their own subsidies, loans, or novel financing concepts to complement the national toolkit. Common local measures include subsidies for technical studies (e.g., quickscans), small-scale sustainability grants, municipal loans for HoAs, and even experimental ideas like guarantee-based funding. These instruments are typically designed to reduce the upfront hurdles for HoAs and encourage them to undertake projects that would not happen with national support alone.

One widespread practice is offering subsidies for initial expert advice or plan development. Several cities cover the cost (fully or partially) of energy scans, feasibility studies, or technical designs in the early phase of a project. For example, Assen provides free or subsidized “quickscans” of buildings. *“We often finance that – we have external bureaus for it”*. By paying consultants to assess an apartment block’s condition and sustainability options, the city gives HoAs a roadmap without them having to invest upfront. Haarlemmermeer follows a similar approach through a partnership program (Vverduurzamen), the municipality actively offers HoAs an energy scan for only 30% of its normal cost, with the city subsidizing the other 70%. Gouda likewise uses a grant to encourage upfront planning. Their “Samen naar een Duurzame Omgeving” (SDO) subsidy covers the costs of hiring an energy advisor or drafting a retrofit plan for resident initiatives, including HoAs. By reimbursing these process costs and even assigning a municipal staff member to guide the HoA’s application, Gouda ensures more associations embark on the journey. In short, guaranteeing or subsidizing the plan preparation phase is emerging as a key local instrument to get projects off the ground.

Utrecht has proposed taking this idea one step further as an innovation, a “garantiesubsidie” (guarantee subsidy) for the plan phase. This hypothetical instrument, introduced by the Utrecht interviewee, would fund a feasibility study or design with city money, but require the HoA to repay it if the project proceeds (essentially converting into a no-interest loan if successful, and a grant if the project fails to materialize). The Utrecht interviewee explained the concept, *“We give a subsidy for a quick scan. If the project goes ahead, you simply pay it back... if it doesn’t go ahead, it’s forgiven”*. Although no municipality has implemented this instrument yet, as Utrecht stated, *“it doesn’t exist currently”*, the Utrecht official sees it as potentially very workable, and even Gouda’s interviewee reacted positively, noting her city would consider such a tool to lower the hesitation of HoAs in the exploratory stage.

Several cities have also introduced municipal loan schemes or local funding pools for HoAs. Often, these are set up via the Stimuleringsfonds Volkshuisvesting Nederland (SVN), a national institution that manages local funds. For instance, Gouda offers an SVN-administered “energy transition loan” for small HoAs. The demand is modest but real, *“we do get occasional inquiries about it”*, she noted, highlighting that numerous small HoAs lack access to the National Heat Fund (which typically targets larger HoAs). Utrecht identified a similar gap, as the National Heat Fund’s standard HoA loan did not suit very small HoAs, particularly because it would not finance any maintenance work. In response, Utrecht created its own stimuleringslening for small HoAs through SVN, explicitly allowing a portion of overdue maintenance to be included if done alongside sustainability upgrades. By accepting a bit of maintenance in the loan scope, the city makes holistic upgrades feasible for small buildings. Other cities, such as Rotterdam, also provide local loans. Rotterdam introduced “Energietransitieleningen” via SVN, which are

essentially municipal sustainability loans specifically for HoAs, sitting alongside the national Warmtefonds loans.

Direct municipal grants for implementation have been used more selectively, often targeted at specific items. Many cities prefer to leverage national subsidies for the bulk of costs and use local grants strategically. For example, Assen sometimes provides a “*small contribution for initial measures*” to push HoAs forward. This might be a few thousand euros to kick-start the insulation of one element as a demonstration. Delft and Rotterdam offer local subsidies for certain actions, like connecting to a district heating network (Delft) or improving insulation (Rotterdam). Delft also opened its “Doe-het-zelf” subsidy (a DIY sustainability voucher originally for private homeowners) to HoAs, specifically to small associations willing to undertake simple upgrades themselves. Through this voucher, HoA members can buy materials (e.g., insulation rolls, LED fixtures) and perform minor works, with the city reimbursing the costs, which results in a practical incentive for small-scale, collective self-renewal (Delft).

Beyond these financial incentives, innovative funding concepts have been emerging from municipal experiences. One notable idea is creating a “VvE vangnet” (HoA safety net) for low-income owner-occupants. Gouda’s sustainability officer mentioned that some larger cities (e.g. Amsterdam) are developing a construction to financially support HoA members who “*actually cannot afford it, but still have to go along*”.

Municipalities have shown considerable creativity in adapting instruments to local circumstances. Many of these tools seek to de-risk or subsidize the early stages of projects (advice, design), reflecting the insight that getting HoAs to a solid plan is only a start. Others tackle financing gaps for implementation, such as special loans or targeted grants where national support doesn’t fully cover costs. Several cities have chosen not to engage certain theoretical tools. No one actively uses property tax rebates or local tax increment financing to stimulate sustainability, although they are often mentioned in brainstorming lists. Haarlemmermeer’s official said a property tax discount for green investments “*means nothing to me*”, underlining that such fiscal instruments remain abstract in practice. Instead, municipalities favor directly applicable incentives like subsidies and loans, which owners and HOAs can more readily access.

Table 2 summarizes the results of Municipal Financial Instruments and the municipalities using them. It highlights both implemented tools and proposed ideas that were raised or discussed in the interviews.

Financial Instruments (Municipal)		
Instrument	Description	Municipalities (Named/Applied)
Subsidy for Energy Advice (Quick Scan / Tailored Advice)	Municipal grant or voucher to cover an energy scan or tailored technical advice for an HoA	Assen, Gouda, Haarlemmermeer, Zwolle, Enschede
Municipal Sustainability Loan (HoA)	City-funded (or city-facilitated) loan for HoAs to finance sustainable renovation, often via SVN	Utrecht, Gouda, Rotterdam, Delft, Zwolle
Local Implementation Subsidies	Direct municipal subsidies for specific measures (insulation, solar, district heating connection, etc.)	Rotterdam, Delft, Utrecht, Leiden
Municipal Co-Financing of Projects	The municipality contributes to the financing of projects	Zwolle, Gouda, Enschede

Taxes and Levies (Property Tax, Valuation)	Reduce property tax for sustainable investments	Maastricht
Reverse Mortgage / Home-Equity Loan (verzilverlening)	Facilitating or promoting loans that allow older homeowners to use their home equity (overwaarde) to pay for renovation	Zwolle, Assen, Maastricht
DIY Subsidy	Subsidy for material costs (DIY projects)	Delft, Gouda
Energy Poverty “HoA Safety Net” Fund	A fund to assist low-income owners in HoAs when a renovation leads to a high contribution they cannot afford	Amsterdam (developing, according to Gouda), Gouda, Delft
Municipal Guarantee on HoA Loan	The municipality acts as guarantor for HoA loans to reduce interest rates and reassure lenders	Utrecht, Rotterdam
Guarantee Subsidy for Plan Preparation (concept)	Subsidy for feasibility studies (only repayable if the project proceeds)	Utrecht, Gouda, Zwolle
Social Investment Logic	Lower profit margin for developers, reinvesting profits in the neighborhood	Leiden, Zwolle

Table 2: Municipal Financial Instruments

4.3.3 Environmental and Spatial Framework Instruments

During the interviews with the Dutch municipalities, several environmental and spatial framework instruments were mentioned. Environmental or housing vision is the strategic long-term spatial policy of a municipality. In practice, few interviewees emphasized using this high-level instrument directly, but it provides important context. For example, Eindhoven’s advisor noted that under the new “Omgevingswet”, every city must prepare a “heat programme” as part of its Omgevingsvisie, specifying when each district will transition off natural gas. In Rotterdam, officials indicated that any bottom-up initiative must align with the city’s broader policy goals, such as climate targets or the municipal housing vision, ensuring consistency with strategic plans. The new environmental plan (Omgevingsplan), which replaces traditional zoning plans, is a legally binding document that municipalities can flexibly adapt for area renewal. Several cities stressed the importance of updating or deviating from these plans to enable interventions in aging neighborhoods. Maastricht adopts a flexible approach where the city will proactively adjust the Omgevingsplan to permit desired developments like rooftop extensions, but if the plan hasn’t caught up, a case-by-case exemption can be made.

Under the Omgevingswet, an environmental programme is a planning instrument that sets out concrete measures or projects to achieve policy goals. Only a few municipalities referenced using this. Eindhoven’s interviewee highlighted the Warmteprogramma (heat transition program) as an important new instrument. By 2026, the city must adopt this program to designate priority neighborhoods for heat network rollout and gas phase-out. This indicates that formal programmes for sustainability are becoming part of the toolkit. Delft, meanwhile, works with more informal area-based plans to guide the energy transition. It has “Wijkuitvoeringsplannen” (district implementation plans) for the heating transition. These programmatic approaches (formal or informal) help set goals for neighborhoods. However, outside of energy/climate planning, the interviews did not indicate extensive use of Omgevingsprogramma’s for broader renovation but rather relying on project-specific arrangements and general policy programs.

A “Buiten Planse Omgevings Activiteit” (BOPA) is an exemption permit allowing a project that deviates from the current plan. Several municipalities view this as crucial for tailor-made

solutions. In Zwolle's pilot, the existing land-use plan would normally prohibit adding new stories or buildings in De Hogenkamp, so the city is prepared to use BOPA procedures to grant exceptions. By using a BOPA, Zwolle can legally permit extra construction (new rooftop apartments or infill housing on former green space) even though the old zoning did not allow it. Maastricht's official likewise noted that if the Omgevingsplan doesn't yet allow a desired development, a BOPA can provide a quicker path to legalization. In short, the BOPA offers flexibility on a case-by-case basis. Across the board, there was an understanding that BOPAs are available and will be used when innovative plans fall outside existing rules.

Several municipalities emphasized the need for an integrated area development framework (ontwikkeldkader) to coordinate various instruments. Zwolle is explicitly formulating such a development framework for its Hogenkamp renewal pilot. This framework combines spatial, economic, and legal "building blocks and rules" to guide the project. Zwolle described it as a fundamental integrated plan that ties together all tools. It provides a spatial framework (what can be built and where, e.g., allowing new apartments), a financial framework (how costs and benefits are shared, which subsidies/loans are used), and a legal framework (what agreements are in place to reinvest profits, etc.). Utrecht's representative also mentioned that they mix financial incentives, support, and planning tools on a case-by-case basis, and that a tailored combination is essential to success.

Allowing additional building height or infill housing was frequently discussed as a key instrument to generate funds and rejuvenate neighborhoods. In Zwolle, vertical expansion ("optopping") and infill development are at the heart of the strategy for renewing aging HoA complexes. By permitting extra rooftop apartments or new buildings on underused land (like former greens or parking lots), the municipality hopes to create a revenue stream for the HoA to finance renovations. Maastricht likewise is open to densification and mentioned that the municipality plans to explicitly allow "optopping" in its updated plans so that such proposals can proceed smoothly. To date, none of the municipalities has completed a rooftop expansion project, but the policy groundwork is being laid. Eindhoven's pilot in Woensel-Zuid, for example, did not include adding new apartments on top of the flats and is focused on renovating existing units. Nevertheless, the concept of expanding building opportunities is widely recognized. Even in cities where it has not been tried, officials see it as a potential incentive. Building more homes creates value that can be redirected to improve the remaining stock. The interviews consistently highlighted this instrument as a promising but complex way to finance sustainability upgrades.

Relaxation of Spatial Requirements is a concept that refers to being flexible with regulations like parking standards, land-use mix, or environmental norms to facilitate redevelopment. Several officials argued that the strict application of standard requirements can make renewal projects financially or spatially unfeasible, so a degree of leniency is needed. Zwolle gave concrete examples of questions to consider in light of being flexible with regulations: *"How do we handle parking norms? ... What about environmental requirements? Could we allow a different mix of functions that might be interesting?"*. These questions illustrate that Zwolle is willing to adjust parking ratios, zoning uses, or noise/air quality standards on a case-by-case basis to enable urban renewal. Other municipalities rarely mentioned specific norms, but the need for flexibility was a common theme. In Leiden's interview, for example, the respondent confirmed that the list of spatial instruments was quite complete and they had no further additions, implying that measures such as easing parking requirements were already known.

Accelerated Vertical Expansion Assessment is an instrument that speeds up the permitting process for rooftop expansions or similar additions, for example, through expedited feasibility

checks or “optopping” pre-approvals. Maastricht’s official agreed that having clear frameworks in place can significantly accelerate permitting. Although not all municipalities have instituted fast-track procedures yet, there is a shared recognition that streamlining the permit process for these small-scale developments can encourage HoAs to take action. Utrecht is stepping in to give early clarity on the viability of plans. The municipality will perform a quick scan or pre-application review for HoAs proposals to add floors, so that the HoA gets an answer before investing significant time and money. This policy is a concrete example of how, by providing a quick municipal feasibility test and fast-track approval, the HoA gains earlier certainty, which can incentivise them to proceed with adding new units (and thereby generate funds for improvements). This instrument illustrates how process innovation (speed and guidance) can be just as important as formal regulations in enabling physical upgrades.

To ensure that development profits are used to reinvest in the renovation and maintenance of the apartment building, a contractual agreement with the HoA is required. Many interviewees highlighted this as a crucial safeguard when pursuing strategies like optopping. Without such agreements, there is a risk that a few individuals could profit from selling new units while the intended renovation doesn’t get funded. In Zwolle’s pilot, the municipality insists on legally binding the reinvestment of proceeds into the project. The municipality must “*juridically fix that... those gains benefit the collective*”, by making it a condition in the permit or a clause in an agreement with the HoA. Other municipalities concurred with this principle. Maastricht’s respondent specifically mentioned that reinvesting development profit in one’s own homes is extremely valuable and should be ensured. Although Maastricht had not yet had to use such an agreement (since no comparable project had occurred yet), they acknowledged its importance for the future. Rotterdam’s officials also recognize this concept. In Rotterdam’s context, one way to capture value is through the land lease system (erfpacht) and then “plough back” lease proceeds into sustainability, but they found that in practice, this can be administratively tricky when applied to individual apartments. Municipalities have little experience yet with formal HoA profit-sharing contracts (since few projects have advanced to that stage), but the interviewees’ comments and the instrument list itself underscore that such agreements are essential. They provide a legal guarantee that any value created by loosening planning rules (such as new housing) is not privatized but is returned to the community interest.

Table 3 summarizes the results of Environmental and Spatial Framework Instruments and the municipalities using them.

Environmental and Spatial Framework Instruments		
Instrument	Description	Municipalities (Named/Applied)
Environmental Vision / Housing Vision	Strategic long-term vision of the municipality on spatial development	Eindhoven, Rotterdam
Environmental Plan / Revision of Zoning Plan	Flexible adaptation of the zoning plan, a legally binding document for spatial use	Zwolle, Maastricht, Enschede
Environmental Programme	Document with concrete measures and projects	Eindhoven, Delft, Enschede
Outside Environmental Plan Activity (BOPA)	Deviation procedure to allow custom solutions outside the existing plan	Zwolle, Maastricht, Leiden, Enschede
Development Framework for Area Development	Integrated framework with rules and building blocks for area development	Zwolle

Expanding Building Opportunities (Vertical Expansion and Infill)	Allow extra building height and housing infill	Utrecht, Zwolle, Maastricht
Relaxation of Spatial Requirements	Flexible approach to parking standards, mixed use, and environmental requirements	Zwolle, Leiden, Delft
Accelerated Vertical Expansion Assessment	Fast-tracked permit process for rooftop expansion	Maastricht, Utrecht
Agreement with HoA	Contractual agreements with the HoA about development profits	Zwolle, Rotterdam, Maastricht

Table 3: Environmental and Spatial Framework Instruments

4.3.4 Different Types of Ownership Structures

Regarding ownership structures, the interviewees had limited input. In parallel to the spatial instruments, municipalities did consider several ownership structures to tackle financial and governance barriers. One traditional approach, municipal land exploitation, was virtually absent in the interviews. In this model, the municipality acts as developer, investing upfront and recouping costs via land sales or rising values. Officials noted that buying out entire HoA complexes and managing full redevelopments is exceedingly rare now. Enschede confirmed that no municipality does this anymore. Similarly, the idea of an area cooperative, which is a collaboration of multiple HoAs or residents to co-manage a neighborhood, remained purely theoretical. Maastricht’s interviewee noted such constructs “have not occurred” in their city, and Enschede’s official said area cooperatives are “hardly applied” in practice.

The housing cooperative model gained only attention from the municipality of Zwolle, which proposed converting a HoA into a housing cooperative. The plan was to unite the apartment owners into a “wooncooperatie” with the municipality as a co-owner, so public and private stakeholders could invest together. A cooperative can retain earnings and reinvest them locally instead of letting profits flow to an outside developer. No other city pursued this path, making this instrument an innovative experiment unique to Zwolle.

A more common issue was mixed ownership in HoAs. In mixed ownership, some units are owned by a housing corporation and others by private individuals. These situations often have misaligned incentives. A corporation may be funded and obligated to upgrade its apartments, while private homeowners might lack resources or urgency. Multiple cities acknowledged that mixed-tenure HoAs are difficult to coordinate. Haarlemmermeer stated that mixed HoAs occur in their city and underscored the need for formal agreements in such cases. Delft mentioned a pilot with mixed HoAs partially owned by a housing corporation and private owners. Rotterdam noted that making local performance agreements with the housing associations about their role in mixed HoAs is of importance. Overall, mixed-ownership HoAs remain challenging.

Another less-used measure was strategic housing ownership by the municipality, where the municipality temporarily buys homes or buildings to improve the situation. Historically, this was done in extreme cases, but it is now seen as a very drastic last resort due to its high cost and risk. Most municipalities did not employ this approach and were surprised by its existence. Enschede stated that “it’s not done nowadays”. Rotterdam and Assen were two notable exceptions. Assen mentioned they are part of HoAs, “The municipality itself is also part of a Homeowners’ Association. That gives you a very different role as an owner, with influence over what happens in the building.”. In Rotterdam, the municipality occasionally buys one or more apartments in a

severely deteriorated HoA (especially where units are very small and unsellable), with the goal of renovating and reconfiguring them, then reselling. Rotterdam stated that they sometimes purchase tiny flats to merge them into a larger, decent unit, becoming a temporary HoA member in the process, and after adding value, the city sells the unit off. This is essentially a municipal flipping mechanism to improve the housing mix and the functioning of the HoA (since very small units often had investor-landlords and neglect). Importantly, Rotterdam uses this tool sparingly and does not aim to be a long-term landlord or HoA manager. Rotterdam intervenes, fixes the issue, and exits. Such an instrument was not on the standard list of tools, but Rotterdam’s experience suggests it can be effective in certain “tailored solutions” where market parties would not step in. By contrast, most other cities were reluctant to consider buying up apartments; an interviewee in Enschede even wondered “*which municipality is actually buying and operating HoAs?*”, implying this structure is quite rare. Rotterdam’s case provides a learning example of municipal co-investment to unblock stalemates in privately-owned stock.

Some interviewees also suggested “limited” or “divisible” ownership models to attract outside investment into HoAs. This essentially splits property rights to give external financiers a stake in exchange for funding upgrades, but no real examples have been realized.

Table 4 summarizes the Ownership Structures that were discussed and the municipalities that named or applied them.

Ownership Structures		
Instrument/ Structure	Description	Municipalities (Named/Applied)
Land Exploitation	Development exploitation, where investments in area development are recouped over time.	Enschede
Area Cooperative	Collaboration between residents and Homeowners’ Associations (HoAs) for joint management and investment	Eindhoven, Gouda
Housing Cooperative	A collective ownership structure where residents collectively own, develop, or manage property	Zwolle, Eindhoven
Mixed Ownership in HoA	A combination of social rental and owner-occupied housing	Eindhoven, Haarlemmermeer, Gouda, Delft, Rotterdam, Enschede
Strategic Housing Ownership by Municipality	The municipality temporarily purchases housing to improve the situation.	Rotterdam, Assen
Limited/Divisible Ownership	Alternative ownership models to facilitate investment.	Gouda, Eindhoven

Table 4: Ownership Structures

4.4 Collaboration and Decision-making

4.4.1 Lessons from Other Municipalities on Participatory Governance

One feature common to all cases mentioned by municipalities in the interviews is the extent to which municipalities adopt a participatory or facilitative governance style when dealing with self-

organized initiatives. Instead of the traditional top-down approach, municipalities consistently emphasize working with the residents and HoAs, respecting their autonomy. A foundational reason is that, legally and practically, HoAs are private entities, and their cooperation is voluntary. Multiple interviewees emphasized that *“You cannot oblige homeowner associations to do anything, there is no legal obligation to do so yet.”* In other words, the initiative and willingness must come from the owners themselves, but can be encouraged. This reality has often driven municipalities towards a governance role of enabler and motivator rather than director. Municipalities, as enablers and motivators, focus on creating conditions in which owners feel empowered to act and on providing guidance rather than issuing orders.

In the interviews, municipalities often described their role as that of a facilitator or partner to the community. The project of De Hogenkamp in Zwolle is inherently participatory since it was initiated by the HoAs themselves. The municipality of Zwolle stated in the interview that it sees itself as a supporter of the HoAs initiative, but the initiative must remain rooted within the community to safeguard against estrangement, as residents must continue to experience the neighborhood as their home. The goal is to build support (*draagvlak*) among the people who live there, *“If you have support, you also have ownership.”* In other words, when residents collectively support a plan, they feel more responsible for it, greatly increasing the chances of its success. Municipalities, therefore, invest in processes that foster local ownership, such as community meetings, workshops, and involving residents in decision-making for area plans.

Municipalities try to balance bottom-up initiatives with top-down support. Assen explicitly does both. The municipality stimulates efforts from below (neighborhood groups, HoAs) while providing resources from above (e.g., an HoA helpdesk), but final decisions still rest with the HoAs. Many initiatives become co-productions. A city might identify a deteriorating building and invite the HoA to act, then support that effort, essentially a mutual initiative. Utrecht shifted in 2023 from a reactive stance to a *“much more proactive approach, specifically focused on HoAs”*, actively canvassing neighborhoods for interested associations. Rotterdam likewise launches neighborhood campaigns via its HoA support team to gather clusters of poorly maintained HoA complexes, since truly self-organized multi-HoA upgrades have *“not yet appeared in a comparable form”*. Thus, municipalities often must spark collective action, as expecting dozens of fragmented HoAs to unite spontaneously is unrealistic.

Building trust is vital since municipalities strive to be seen not as regulators but as partners that residents can trust. Haarlemmermeer describes its approach as “supportive”. HoAs make decisions themselves, but the city narrows the knowledge gap and lightens the financial load by providing technical assistance and linking them to subsidies or loans, aiming to create a shared purpose rather than imposing from above. Personal engagement with residents is key to building confidence in this softer approach.

Even in projects involving housing corporations or investor-landlords, municipalities favor dialogue and negotiated solutions over enforcement, aligning everyone’s interests so that all parties cooperate.

4.4.2 Risk-Sharing in Decision-Making

A recurring challenge in these collaborations is financial risk. Who pays for significant investments in neighborhood improvements? Interviews revealed that municipalities remain very cautious about sharing such risk. Generally, municipalities have been reluctant to assume or guarantee significant costs on behalf of HoAs directly, and formal risk-sharing arrangements are almost nonexistent. Assen noted that the municipality might provide subsidies or upfront funding

for technical studies (taking on some initial cost to incentivise action). Still, the actual financial risk of renovation stays with the homeowners. One Assen official admitted he could not think of a single example of true risk-sharing, underscoring that HoAs themselves bear primary responsibility for financing improvements. In practice, owners carry the risk and costs of maintenance and upgrades, while the municipality supports and accelerates where possible, but stops short of taking on financial liabilities.

Some municipalities are exploring creative ways to distribute risk. In Zwolle's case, because neither the residents nor the city could finance an entire project alone, they looked at involving a private developer to shoulder part of the investment. The idea was that the developer would bring in capital and be allowed to build additional housing to make the project financially feasible. The risk (and potential profit) of that new development would lie primarily with the developer, not with the HoA or the city. However, such a public-private partnership requires trust and clear agreements. The developer's profit must be kept reasonable and aligned with the public interest. The goal is a win-win, where the developer earns a profit from new construction, and the community benefits by having those profits reinvested into the sustainable renovation of the existing buildings.

Overall, formal risk-sharing between municipalities and HoAs remains extremely rare. Rather than directly co-investing or taking on long-term liabilities, municipalities typically encourage and facilitate investment by others while supporting them through indirect means like grants, low-interest loans, technical assistance, or guarantees, instead of the municipality itself becoming a co-owner and gaining financial responsibility. In essence, the economic burden of significant improvements stays with the homeowners, and the municipality's role is to enable and accelerate projects without formally sharing the risk.

4.5 Key Insights

According to the interviews, Dutch municipalities work most efficiently as enablers and partners when they collaborate with self-organized citizen initiatives. Instead of relying on top-down plans, municipalities adopt a facilitative governance style rather than directing. In order to support homeowners, municipalities focus on capacity building, fostering learning, and establishing trust. A pilot-based approach, where projects are treated as experimental learning, has proven valuable for promoting flexibility and innovation, as long as the learning component is well documented. Pilots allow municipalities to test new concepts, such as “optopping” to fund renovation and sustainability measures, in a controlled environment. Many municipalities seem to use soft governance tools like HoA helpdesks, educational workshops, process coaches, and even HoA cafés, which can help municipalities overcome barriers within HoAs and thus stimulate urban renewal. Crucially, this soft approach is complemented by the strategic use of financial instruments. Most municipalities leverage a combination of national and sometimes European funds (for sustainability, housing, and energy transition) and introduce tailor-made local incentives. This ranges from subsidies for technical quick-scans to dedicated low-interest loans, which reduce costs and risk for HoAs, stimulating action. While these financial tools are harder instruments, they are deployed in a way that still respects the HoAs and their ownership. The municipality stimulates, accelerates, and de-risks projects without taking control through financial tools. Formal risk-sharing like co-investing in private renovations remains rare. However, municipalities come up with creative solutions like public-private partnerships, inviting a developer to invest under clear agreements to distribute risk and reward. Importantly, municipalities also navigate environmental and spatial planning frameworks to enable sustainable renewal. They use new flexible planning instruments (for example, under the Dutch “Omgevingswet” and case-by-case exemptions like BOPA) to adapt zoning and regulations so that innovative renovations and infill developments can proceed within an inclusive, climate-conscious vision for the neighborhood. Out of this chapter, a participatory, adaptive, and tailored approach emerged as key. The municipalities in the Netherlands act as coordinators, where they align stakeholders, knowledge, and resources, collaborating with partners who involve residents in decision-making from the start and safeguard against estrangement to ensure the renewal effort remains socially inclusive and rooted in community needs. This collaborative approach builds support among the community, resulting in local ownership (*draagvlak*). Municipalities often favor dialogue and negotiated solutions over enforcement to improve trust and have certainty that all parties cooperate.

The interviews with Dutch municipalities revealed that the facilitative role of the municipality stimulates sustainable urban renewal. In this facilitative role, the municipality combines soft and hard instruments, building mutual trust and remaining flexible as an enabler. As an enabler, the municipality provides guidance, incentives, and a supportive environment. Pilot projects were often mentioned and are valuable for promoting flexibility and innovation, while the municipality can justify the focus of resources on a self-organized citizen initiative because of its urgency and the opportunity. This way, the municipality can co-create effective strategies with residents and the initiative itself. These insights highlight a governance approach involving flexibility, shared vision, and careful risk mediation, improving collaboration between public and private actors, allowing them to jointly achieve a neighborhood transformation that is supported and sustainable for the long term.

Table 5 summarizes the most promising key instruments, and Figure 3 illustrates how municipalities can apply these instruments to support self-organized citizen initiatives of HoAs.

Promising Instruments for Municipalities Supporting HoAs	
Instrument Category	Key Instruments
Governance Approaches	Participatory governance, co-production with HoAs, trust-building processes, public-private partnerships
Spatial and Legal Instruments	BOPA (permit exemption, environmental plan/program, relaxation of spatial requirements (e.g., parking norm), profit reinvestment agreement
Financial Instruments	Warmtefonds loans, SVVE subsidy, ISDE subsidy, national insulation program (NIP), quick-scan subsidies, local co-financing, guarantee subsidy
Soft Support Tools	HoA helpdesks, HoA cafés, information evenings, quick scans, educational workshops, knowledge platforms
Pilot-Based Approaches	Pilot projects, process coaches, neighborhood-based pilots

Table 5: Promising Instruments for Municipalities Supporting HoAs

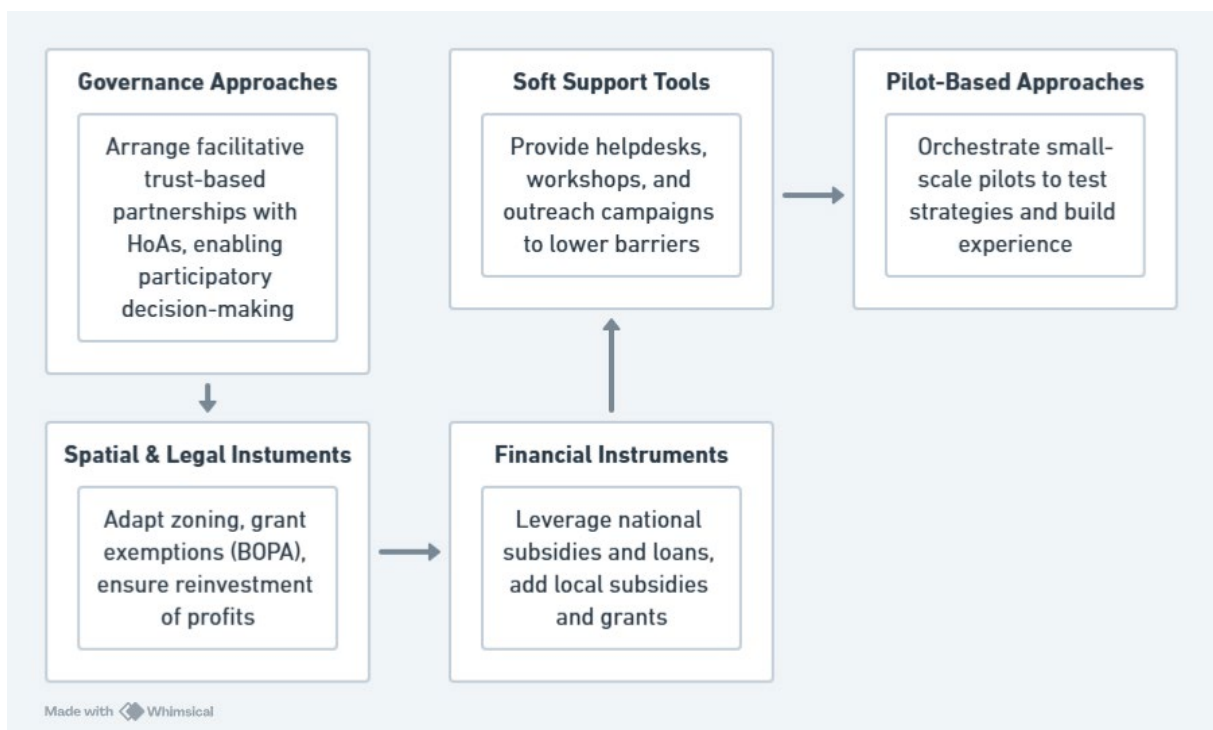


Figure 3: Roadmap for Municipalities Supporting Self-Organized Citizen Initiatives of HoAs

5. Results, Sub-Study 2: The case of De Hogenkamp

5.1 Introduction of the Case

De Hogenkamp is a small post-war physically degraded neighborhood in the Dieze-Oost district of Zwolle. The neighborhood was developed in the 1960s after World War II, due to a housing need. Now, 60 years later, the neighborhood is in need of extensive renovation, since all buildings are overdue for maintenance. De Hogenkamp consists primarily of low-rise apartment blocks arranged in a green setting. The area contains 22 similar flats (portiekflats) of three to four stories each, plus one larger flat. Most flats consist of 10 to 14 apartments. The complexes are surrounded by trees and a nearby park (Weytingh et al., 2024).

A defining feature of De Hogenkamp is its fragmented property ownership structure. All 22 apartment complexes are privately owned, each organized under its own homeowner association. Each HoA not only manages its respective building but also the surrounding grounds, as almost all the green space between the flats is on privately owned land, collectively owned by the apartment owners. The municipality retains ownership only of the public roads, a few sidewalks, and some parking areas. This means that decision-making power and maintenance responsibilities are distributed across all homeowners. There is no single landlord or housing corporation, so all flats operate individually. Historically, coordination between different HoAs has been minimal. The lack of governance for the whole neighborhood contributed to a situation in which broader issues went unaddressed. The fragmented ownership and divided decision-making have stopped any significant upgrades to the neighborhood: *“Ownership and control are fragmented among a few hundred private individuals, and that is why nothing changes”* (Weytingh et al., 2024, p. 8).

Despite these structural challenges, there have been efforts to introduce a coordinating influence in the area. A local cooperative called “WijBedrijf Dieze” has been active in the district Dieze as an umbrella organization supporting sustainability and community initiatives since 2014. This cooperative views sustainable neighborhoods not only as energy-efficient but also socially strong. In De Hogenkamp, the cooperative and community leaders have for some time recognized the need to halt the area's decline and have explored ideas for improving both the housing stock and public domain. By early 2025, the physical state of the neighborhood clearly underscored this urgency. The apartment complexes, which are now around 60 years old, are extremely outdated and have backlogged maintenance across all the flats. Many components of the whole built environment are at the end of their life cycles, including the flats, infrastructure, and shared outdoor spaces (Weytingh et al., 2024).

In summary, De Hogenkamp, as of 2025, is a neighborhood with an attractive layout and community potential, but suffers from aging apartments and infrastructure, fragmented ownership (22 HoAs), and only evolving coordination through an umbrella organization (WijBedrijf Dieze). These factors set the stage for the intervention and research initiative of the case of De Hogenkamp.

In the section below are a few visualizations presented of the area to provide a clearer representation of the context.

Figure 4 shows the cadastral situation and indicates that public roads, parking areas, and sidewalks are under municipal ownership. Green spaces surrounding the apartments are owned by the homeowner associations.



Figure 5: Cadastral Situation and Aerial Photo of the Project Area

Figures 5, 6, and 7 present visual representations of street views that illustrate that the current public space is allocated mostly to infrastructure and parking, while the green areas are limited to the surroundings of the apartments and are privately owned.



Figure 4: Street with On-Street Parking and Private Green Space



Figure 6: Central Parking Area



Figure 7: Side Court Parking Next to Apartment Building

5.2 State of the Art in March 2025: Municipality Embraces the Self-Organized Citizen Initiative

By October 2024, action research was conducted by ToekomstSterk, on behalf of WijBedrijf Deze, for an initiative in De Hogenkamp. This was documented in the “Eindrapportage Hogenkamp”, which assessed the condition of the flats and explored potential improvement and collaboration strategies.

The findings painted a clear picture of both the physical and organizational challenges facing the neighborhood. On the physical side, the 22 apartment complexes suffer from serious deterioration and aging. Most buildings have very poor energy performance, where the majority of apartments carry an energy label E or worse, reflecting minimal insulation. Essential building systems are failing. For instance, several flats were recently confronted with structural safety issues such as unsafe balconies, prompting urgent repairs. The original plumbing and ventilation infrastructure are also nearing the end of their lifespan. Additionally, broken sewer connections on private property have led to soil subsidence, water damage, and mold in and around some buildings. The flats were built without elevators, which has become a problem as the resident population ages. Noise is another common complaint because the lightweight construction and uninsulated walls and floors transmit sound easily between units and from stairwells, undermining living comfort (Weytingh et al., 2024).

De Hogenkamp is characterized by poor energy efficiency, structural and systems deficiencies, and a lack of modern amenities. These problems constitute a major renovation and sustainability challenge for the homeowner associations.

Organizationally, the capacity of the HoAs to respond to these problems has been limited. Each association is relatively small and is run by the apartment owners themselves, often with only a few active board members. The rapport indicates that many Hogenkamp HoAs struggle with low participation among their members. Presence at meetings can be low, and consensus hard to achieve, which means essential decisions are frequently delayed or avoided. The financial positions of the homeowner associations are generally weak as well. Reserve funds accumulated for major repairs tend to be insufficient for the scale of renovations now required, especially since the backlog of maintenance. In several flats, there is an imbalance of interests that complicates decision-making. A portion of units are owned by investors and landlords who rent them out, while the rest are owner-occupiers.

These two groups do not always share the same incentives or urgency for investing in upgrades. The report stated that, “*There can be major conflicts of interest within homeowner associations, for example, between landlords and private resident-owners.*” (Weytingh et al., 2024, p. 9). The

volunteers in the HoAs often lack knowledge of the built environment, which impacts their ability to answer technical and financial questions. This made the HoAs uncertain to initiate anything but basic maintenance, let alone coordinate urban renewal of the neighborhood (Weytingh et al., 2024).

The action-research project formulated four potential strategies (routes) to improve the situation in De Hogenkamp. These routes describe a spectrum of interventions, from small, incremental fixes to an extensive neighborhood transformation. Each route is essentially a strategic approach combining choices about the scale of the renovations (individual building or whole area), the degree of coordination among HoAs, and the inclusion of broader neighborhood improvements.

Below, the four routes are described in short, along with the types of interventions they include and how they differ from one another:

Route 1: Step-by-Step

This is the usual municipal strategy for HoAs in the Netherlands. No big coordinated action is taken, and each homeowner association continues to carry out maintenance and minor upgrades at its own initiative, only when issues arise or funds allow. Only repairs are done to keep the buildings habitable, and occasional small-scale energy improvements might be implemented if subsidized. Route 1 involves no external interventions and does not address neighborhood-level issues like the old infrastructure, parking shortages, or shared green space improvements. This strategy serves as a baseline reference, illustrating what the future of Hogenkamp would look like if only uncoordinated maintenance continues. It was found that very few residents actually prefer this strategy. Only about 6% of surveyed owners viewed pure reactive maintenance as a “wise” approach, indicating that most recognize the need for a more proactive plan (Weytingh et al., 2024).

Route 2: Flat Transformation – Individual

Route 2 envisions each apartment building undergoing a one-time, full-scale renovation, but still as separate HoAs without coordination among different flats. This approach hypothesizes that doing many measures simultaneously is more cost-effective in the long run than a string of small fixes. Such a comprehensive flat transformation would typically include structural repairs and upgrades (fixing noise insulation issues, reinforcing or renewing balconies, installing a lift if feasible, etc.), extensive energy-efficiency measures (insulating walls, roof, and floors, installing high-performance glazing, sealing drafts), and heating system improvements (for example, replacing old boilers with electric heat pumps). Because this strategy requires significant funding, Route 2 incorporates an important intervention, adding new apartments by infill (inplinten) or on top (optoppen) of each building to help finance the renovations. These extra units, once sold or rented, generate funds that make the costly upgrades more financially realistic for the HoA. As a result, broader collective infrastructure is not addressed at this stage. Similarly, neighborhood-wide problems like the aging sewer mains or lack of parking are assumed to remain the municipality’s problem in the future. Route 2 thus delivers significant improvements to each participating flat. It’s worth noting that this strategy still has some effects at the neighborhood level, for example, an increase in residents will increase parking demand. The report used Route 2 as a test case to see how far individual HoAs could go on their own. It found that a one-off total renovation is technically feasible, but only if new housing is added, and even then, the financial burden per homeowner would be heavy without external support. About 75% of the surveyed owners viewed this as a positive approach (Weytingh et al., 2024).

Route 3: Flat Transformation – Joint

Route 3 takes the flat renovation concept and scales it up to a collaborative approach across multiple buildings simultaneously. In this strategy, several or potentially all Hogenkamp HoAs would coordinate their renovation projects and work together. The idea is to capture economies of scale and tackle shared issues together. If multiple flats are upgraded as a bundle, the cost per unit can decrease. Contractors can renovate units in batches, materials can be procured in bulk, and certain fixed costs (architectural plans, project management, permits) are spread over more homes. The report notes that Route 3, “*creates economies of scale: build cost per added apartment goes down, as do renovation costs per existing apartment*” (Weytingh et al., 2024, p. 17). Crucially, Route 3 introduces a neighborhood-level vision to guide the coordinated renovations. Once multiple buildings act together, their interventions produce collective impacts that must be planned for. If every flat intends to add extra units (by “optopping” or infill), the cumulative increase in apartments will significantly raise the demand for parking and might reduce green space if each HoA builds new storage or parking on its own land. Unregulated, this could turn green courtyards into parking lots, degrading the neighborhood's open character. Route 3 envisions the Hogenkamp HoAs working jointly and working with the municipality to address such externalities. Another opportunity is exploring selective redevelopment. The report considered whether a few adjacent flats could be demolished and replaced with a single larger new apartment building on the combined site, as a way to add more housing and improve quality in one step. All these measures require a higher level of planning. The self-organized citizen initiative of De Hogenkamp would effectively become an area development project rather than just building maintenance. In summary, Route 3 offers a way to achieve broader improvements and cost-sharing through HoA collaboration and some municipal support, but it requires a partnership and introduces significant coordination challenges (Weytingh et al., 2024).

Route 4: Neighborhood Transformation

The most ambitious strategy, Route 4, treats the entirety of De Hogenkamp as one integrated project for urban renewal. In this route, every building in the neighborhood would be modernized in a coordinated manner, and the surrounding infrastructure and public space would be renovated as well. This approach creates the opportunity to tackle long-standing systemic issues in one sweep, essentially a full neighborhood transformation. The ageing municipal sewer system that runs under Hogenkamp (still the original pipes from the 1960s) could be completely replaced or upgraded alongside the flat renovations. Similarly, the outdated gas lines could be removed, followed by every apartment transitioning off natural gas, with the potential to implement a district heating network (warmtenet) for the entire area. Crucially, the parking shortage would be addressed at the neighborhood level. However, this requires exceptional coordination since there is no single owner, like a housing corporation, to lead this effort. All 22 HoAs and the municipality would need to form a coalition to carry out a multi-year district-wide project. The feasibility of a warmtenet, for instance, was analyzed in the action research, since only such a large coordinated effort would justify a new heating infrastructure (Weytingh et al., 2024).

The municipality of Zwolle responded to the initiative of De Hogenkamp with a municipal dimension strategy. In other words, treating it as a collective, area-based challenge requiring active public-sector involvement, rather than a purely private matter for the HoAs. In practical terms, this means the city is moving away from a purely reactive role, where it would only enforce existing regulations or respond to individual permit applications, and towards a more proactive, coordinating role in line with the requirements of Route 3 or 4. The final report had made it clear that without new spatial planning frameworks and a co-creative stance by the government, the more ambitious routes would not be achievable. Acknowledging this, Zwolle's municipal

authorities have begun to adapt their approach. They announced plans to develop an “environmental programme” specifically for the Hogenkamp vicinity, to be established under the new Environment and Planning Act. This area program is essentially a tailor-made policy and planning framework for the neighborhood, created in collaboration with local stakeholders. Having such a program carry formal status under the Omgevingswet allows the city to actively participate in projects and update zoning or norms as needed for the urban renewal of De Hogenkamp (Weytingh et al., 2024).

5.3 Results of the Collaboration Strategy Workshop

This workshop was conducted to evaluate five collaboration strategies that were formulated by examining the specific needs of De Hogenkamp and drawing on lessons from approaches used by other municipalities. To evaluate these five strategies, 10 evaluation criteria were developed based on the broad welfare approach. With these strategies and 10 evaluation criteria, the municipal officials filled in a multi-criteria analysis to determine the preferred strategy. The handout for this workshop contains the ten evaluation criteria, five collaboration strategies, and a multi-criteria table. This handout for Workshop One is included in Appendix 3 and contains the evaluation criteria and designed collaboration strategies.

5.3.1 Design of the Workshop

De Hogenkamp had designed four different routes with different ranges. These routes provided a local context for strategy development. Sub-study 1 offered insights into practical strategies and instruments used by other municipalities in the Netherlands, supplemented by section 2.1 on governance strategies. By combining these inputs into strategy packages corresponding to different levels of municipal roles, the collaboration strategies were designed. In these strategies, the municipality takes on a directive role, a facilitative role, or a distancing role. Initial versions of the strategies were refined using stakeholder feedback from Zwolle officials. Each strategy aligns with a distinct governance role, explained in section 2.4.2. It appeared that these governance roles also reflect different neighbourhood renewal routes, which are outlined in the “Eindrapportage Hogenkamp” (Weytingh et al., 2024).

To evaluate the designed collaboration strategies within the workshop, ten evaluation criteria were developed: “1. investment risk, 2. sustainable heat supply, 3. heat stress/climate adaptation, 4. chance of success in making all homeowner associations sustainable, 5. livability/quality, 6. balanced housing supply, 7. legitimacy of investment in priority area, 8. number of additional homes, 9. parking pressure, and 10. knowledge gained from innovation”. The evaluation criteria were based on the theory of the broad welfare approach and mission-oriented municipal goals, in combination with the municipality's local policy goals and contextual factors of De Hogenkamp, outlined in Table 6. These evaluation criteria can reflect the wider societal implications of each strategy.

Foundations of Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Criteria
Mission-Oriented Municipal Goals	1 and 8
Municipalities Local Policy Goals	2, 3, and 9
Broad Welfare Approach	5, 6, and 7
Contextual Factors	4 and 10

Table 6: Foundations of the Evaluation Criteria

These criteria were explicitly presented to workshop participants as the basis for assessing and comparing each proposed strategy scenario. The resulting design, therefore, ensured that

scenario development was grounded in both theoretical governance roles and the specific policy and contextual realities of the municipality of Zwolle and De Hogenkamp and that evaluation would be guided by broadly recognized governance principles and local priorities.

In the section below, the prepared strategies and evaluation criteria for the multi-criteria analysis are presented.

Strategy 1a, Integrated neighborhood approach

In this strategy, the municipality assumes a coordinating director role in an integrated neighborhood renewal approach. All essential improvements are planned in an integrated project. The municipality and homeowner associations form a project organization or neighborhood team to develop a neighborhood vision. By bundling national and municipal subsidies and easing spatial rules such as parking norms and permitting rooftop extensions, this strategy achieves a coherent upgrade of all flats together. This also results in economies of scale and equal opportunities for every HoA to renovate, but requires high municipal commitment and project management capacity. This approach aligns with “Route 4”, where renovation, sustainability, and livability improvements are tackled collectively.

Strategy 1b, Integrated neighborhood approach with strategic land ownership

This strategy builds on strategy 1a by adding active municipal ownership and development to ensure that the neighborhood transformation continues. The municipality acquires poorly insulated apartments, thereby joining the HoA as a co-owner. By investing directly, the municipality can steer redevelopment plans from within the HoA, enabling the municipality to accelerate decisions and build trust among residents that the projects will proceed. This strategy essentially creates a public-private partnership where the municipality serves as director and partial developer. This strategy trades greater municipal risk for greater influence in ensuring the neighborhood transformation is completed.

Strategy 1c, Integrated neighborhood approach with area cooperative (heating/management)

This strategy introduces a cooperative structure to manage certain utilities or collective services, such as a neighborhood heat network or maintenance cooperative. The municipality still takes the lead in organizing an integrated renewal, like in strategy 1a, including installing a sustainable heating infrastructure. After constructing the district heating network, the operation and management will be transferred to a community-led cooperative with residents, which the municipality will help to establish and potentially co-own 50% during an initial period. The municipality also provides support through national and municipal financial tools to get the cooperative on its feet. This strategy strengthens the long-term local involvement and capacity, while limiting the municipality's financial role to the start-up phase.

Strategy 2a, Facilitating through combinations of regulations and process guidance

The municipality adopts a facilitator role in strategy 2a, where they actively support HoAs but do not direct their projects. The municipality combines guidance, incentives, and regulatory flexibility to enable and stimulate homeowner associations to initiate upgrades. Key national programs and subsidies are bundled and supplemented by the municipality where needed. Process coaches are assigned to the homeowner associations and guide them through decision-making and planning. At the same time, the municipality eases specific regulations to allow extra floors and reduce parking requirements when the HoA is ready to renovate. This approach aligns with “Route 2”, recognizing that some active HoAs could move faster than others. This strategy has reduced costs and risks compared to strategies 1a, 1b, and 1c.

Strategy 3a, Homeowner associations are responsible for implementation

Strategy 3a represents the distancing role. The municipality remains in its current minimal role, providing only the usual information and enforcing existing regulations, while HoAs are entirely responsible for any renovations. Not many homeowner associations will take big measures themselves without municipal support and will resume undertaking maintenance or energy upgrades at their own pace and capacity. This strategy aligns with “Route 1”, where the current situation is described. Taking this path carries virtually no cost or effort for the municipality, but also does not improve the community, which results in failure to meet municipal goals.

Evaluation criteria

1. **Investment risk** was included to capture the long-term financial uncertainty and fair distribution of risks between public and private actors. This is an important consideration as effective transitions require sharing risks and rewards equitably (Putters, 2024).
2. **Sustainable heat supply** reflects ecological well-being. Strategies that enable clean, reliable energy (like a district heat network) advance environmental sustainability. Access to sustainable energy should be seen as a public interest (Putters, 2024).
3. **Heat stress/climate adaptation** addressed the need for resilience to future climate impacts; measures such as greening and insulation improve environmental health and thus community welfare, aligning with the principle that welfare must account for future generations’ well-being (Hospers & Janssen, 2021).
4. The **chance of success in making all homeowner associations sustainable** was a social-inclusivity criterion, ensuring that no building or homeowner is left out. Broad welfare theory emphasizes that the benefits of transitions should be accessible to all groups, not only the most resourceful or knowledgeable HoAs (Putters, 2024).
5. **Livability/quality** of the neighborhood was included since broad welfare is ultimately about the well-being of citizens, determined by factors like living environment, health, safety, and social relations (Thissen & Content, 2022).
6. **The Balanced housing supply** involves the mix of affordable housing options for diverse income brackets. Rijpma et al. (2017) name housing as one of the eleven well-being dimensions, which underlines that housing indicators are crucial for broad welfare.
7. The **legitimacy of investment in a priority area** was a governance criterion examining whether public investments in this vulnerable neighborhood are justified by broad welfare gains like reducing inequality (Thissen & Content, 2022).
8. The **number of additional homes** reduces the housing shortage. Building more affordable homes contributes to the enjoyment of life and security, which in turn benefits the broad welfare (Thissen & Content, 2022).
9. **Parking pressure** is not directly mentioned in the literature, but it is an essential local policy. However, it falls under the category of quality of life. Reducing parking and traffic pressure, therefore, benefits the ecological and social dimensions of broad welfare (Raspe, 2024).
10. **Knowledge gained from innovation** recognized that an innovative pilot in De Hogenkamp could boost future sustainability efforts citywide and beyond through innovation. Building local capacity for innovation is seen as crucial to long-term, broad welfare (Putters, 2024).

5.3.2 Results of the Workshop

While conducting the workshop, there was a time shortage due to a previous meeting of the municipality. After the workshop, the participants filled in the handout and later submitted it. The participants in this workshop consisted of three municipal officials from Zwolle and one

stakeholder of the De Hogenkamp initiative. Only the three municipal officials participated in the handout, evaluating the collaboration strategies to capture the vision of the municipality.

During the workshop, a few discussions sparked while walking through the designed strategies. Financial support is crucial to enable and stimulate HoAs. One participant noted that concentrating parking into hubs is possible, but they do not generate sufficient revenue to recover their cost. However, this investment has been made before in the municipality of Zwolle and can be justified as a municipal measure to enhance livability. It was also discussed that in Strategy 1b, a new apartment block could be constructed. This would create temporary relocation capacity for residents who need to move from other flats during the renovation works, thereby preventing displacement. In this strategy, the municipality assumes a dual role, both as a property owner and as a coordinator. This dual role presents financial and legal challenges. Furthermore, in Strategy 1c, it was noted that the scope of the approach could be broadened, for example, by including water management and green space provision within the area-based cooperative. A clear division of responsibilities and sufficient expertise is crucial before the municipality withdraws from the process. It was also mentioned that in Denmark, heating companies operate on a non-profit basis where no profit or loss is generated, and all revenues are reinvested. A similar model could potentially be adopted here. Regarding Strategy 2a, it was observed that collaboration between different homeowner association projects is not guaranteed. This collaboration would only occur if all HoAs were to collaborate perfectly on their own accord, which was considered unrealistic without municipal coordination. Municipal leadership, cooperation, and tailored solutions are essential for neighborhood transformations. In Strategy 3a, it is not expected that these conditions would be met.

The data gathered through the handout of this workshop was then used to calculate an average score for each criterion for each collaboration strategy and the total weight for each criterion. Even without weighing the criteria, Strategy 2a and 3a already seemed to fall off.

Criteria	Strategy				
	1a	1b	1c	2a	3a
1 Investment risk	3,00	1,67	1,67	4,00	5,00
2 Sustainable heat supply	2,67	4,33	5,00	1,67	1,00
3 Heat stress / Climate adaptation	4,33	4,67	4,67	2,67	1,67
4 Chance of success in making all homeowner associations sustainable	4,00	5,00	4,67	2,67	1,67
5 Liveability/quality	4,33	4,67	4,67	3,00	2,00
6 Balanced housing supply	4,00	4,67	4,33	3,00	1,67
7 Legitimacy of investment in priority area	4,67	3,67	3,67	4,00	3,67
8 Number of additional homes	4,33	5,00	4,33	3,33	2,33
9 Parking pressure	3,33	3,33	3,33	2,00	2,00
10 Knowledge gained from innovation	4,67	4,67	5,00	3,67	3,00

Table 7: Average Criteria Scores per Strategy (Data Gathered from Workshop 1)

Criteria	Weight			Total
	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	
1 Investment risk	20	15	15	50
2 Sustainable heat supply	15	5	4	24
3 Heat stress / Climate adaptation	5	5	4	14
4 Chance of success in making all homeowner associations sustainable	15	10	10	35
5 Liveability/quality	5	5	20	30
6 Balanced housing supply	5	5	4	14
7 Legitimacy of investment in priority area	15	15	20	50
8 Number of additional homes	0	5	4	9
9 Parking pressure	5	5	4	14
10 Knowledge gained from innovation	15	15	15	45

Table 8: Weight of the Criteria (Data Gathered from Workshop 1)

Criteria	Strategy				
	1a	1b	1c	2a	3a
1 Investment risk	150,00	83,33	83,33	200,00	250,00
2 Sustainable heat supply	64,00	104,00	120,00	40,00	24,00
3 Heat stress / Climate adaptation	60,67	65,33	65,33	37,33	23,33
4 Chance of success in making all homeowner associations sustainable	140,00	175,00	163,33	93,33	58,33
5 Liveability/quality	130,00	140,00	140,00	90,00	60,00
6 Balanced housing supply	56,00	65,33	60,67	42,00	23,33
7 Legitimacy of investment in priority area	233,33	183,33	183,33	200,00	183,33
8 Number of additional homes	39,00	45,00	39,00	30,00	21,00
9 Parking pressure	46,67	46,67	46,67	28,00	28,00
10 Knowledge gained from innovation	210,00	210,00	225,00	165,00	135,00
Outcomes	1129,67	1118,00	1126,67	925,67	806,33

Table 9: Weights Applied to the Average Criteria Scores (Data Gathered from Workshop 1)

Based on the workshop-derived weights (Table 8) and aggregated criterion scores (Table 7), Strategy 1a achieved the highest score (1129,67), slightly ahead of Strategy 1c (1126,67). As shown in Table 9, Strategy 1a is identified as the preferred Strategy. This preference appears to be driven by a favorable assessment of “investment risk” and “legitimacy of investment in priority area”. This outcome is consistent with the underlying characteristics of Strategy 1a, in which the municipality commits a lower level of investment and assumes a more limited role in project execution compared to Strategy 1b and 1c. Such an approach can be more readily justified to

stakeholders in other districts, as it avoids concentrating resources exclusively within a single area and thereby mitigates perceptions of preferential treatment.

The mixed approach of combining a director role with a facilitator role was deemed favorable by the municipality, which focuses on area-based urban renewal by initially taking the directive role and transitioning to a facilitative role once the initiative is operational, ensuring the participation of the HoAs. The municipality will invest in the necessary infrastructure renovations and maintain ownership and upkeep of its public spaces. This mixed approach allows the municipality to collaborate with the homeowner associations in the renewal process and ensure that the urban renewal process is set in motion through strong leadership.

5.4 Results of the Transformative Governance Workshop

The goal of this workshop is to determine how the organization of the municipality of Zwolle needs to be reorganized to implement the preferred renewal Strategy 1a. This workshop is designed based on transformative governance literature, insights from the interviews, and the outcome of Workshop One. The handout for this workshop contains eleven transformative governance capacities derived from the literature. The handout for Workshop Two is included in Appendix 4.

5.4.1 Design of the Workshop

The design of Workshop Two was guided by the preferred collaboration strategy of Workshop One, and how to internally shift the organization of the municipality of Zwolle. Rather than introducing a new framework, the guiding principles were distilled from the transformative governance capacities identified in Chapter 2.2. Eleven guiding principles were designed to investigate specific challenges the municipality of Zwolle faces in supporting the self-organized citizen initiative of De Hogenkamp. The discussion was academically grounded and practically relevant because the guiding principles were based on transformative governance theory. Based on this theory and some context of the case of De Hogenkamp, the following guiding principles were developed: “1. Leadership (and courage), 2. Change of discourse, 3. From “small-wins” to “big-wins”, 4. Focus on experimentation, treat this project as an “experiment”, 5. Working across sectors on a higher “mission”, 6. Orchestrating in networks, 7. Structure and project organisation, 8. Filling the “tactical gap”, 9. Instrumentation with new instruments, 10. Utilizing lessons learned from the experiment for future municipal projects, 11. The Hogenkamp case: working with fragmented ownership”.

These guiding principles connect to the transformative governance capacities (Hölscher et al., 2019). The four transformative governance capacities include transformative capacities, stewarding capacities, unlocking capacities, and orchestrating capacities. At last, working with fragmented ownership was based on the context-specific challenge of De Hogenkamp, together with the theory on institutional fragmentation (section 2.5.2), suggesting that fragmented property rights raise coordination costs and slow urban renewal (Adams et al., 2001).

Foundation of Guiding Principles	Guiding Principles
Transformative Capacities	1 and 2
Stewarding Capacities	3, and 10
Unlocking Capacities	4, 8, and 9
Orchestrating Capacities	5, 6, and 7
Context-Specific Challenge: Fragmented Ownership	11

Table 10: Foundation of Guiding Principles

In Workshop One, participants selected an active participation strategy via an integrated neighborhood approach as the preferred renewal strategy for De Hogenkamp. To design Workshop Two, transformative governance theory was used from Chapter 2 to spark a discussion on how to translate this collaboration strategy into an actionable plan.

In the section below, the theory is matched to the guiding principles designed for Workshop Two.

Drawing from transformative governance theory ensured this workshop aligned with guiding principles such as the stewarding, unlocking, transformative, and orchestrating capacities by Hölscher et al. (2019).

Transformative Capacities (1 and 2)

Municipal officials could reflect on how to internally adapt and build the capacities they need to facilitate the self-organized citizen initiative. VanHoose and Bertolini (2023) emphasized the need for “promoters” to lead the integrated renewal initiative, which is crucial for initiating and legitimizing new experiments like De Hogenkamp. Transformative governance often begins with shifting the dominant narrative within the municipality (Hölscher et al., 2019). Developing a new vision that challenges existing norms can break through administrative barriers like path dependencies and unite stakeholders.

Stewarding Capacities (3 and 10)

Bryson (1988) used a concept of pursuing “small-wins” before chasing “big-wins”. By focusing on a series of achievable improvements, the municipality can reduce risk while fostering learning and building momentum. This approach is well-suited to a vulnerable neighborhood where successes can motivate broader support. Termeer et al. (2017) stressed that lessons learned from experimental projects must be captured and shared, since transformative efforts remain sustainable only if the organization “learns to adapt” by embedding new knowledge into its practices.

Unlocking Capacities (4, 8, and 9)

Experimental governance is another concept that frames projects not as a conventional plan but as a learning process. Potjer (2019) states that the goal is not immediate success but iterative learning through controlled risk-taking through a safe space for “trial-and-error”. Filling the tactical gap is linked to the unlocking capacity, which is the missing link between strategic policy and operational implementation. Termeer et al. (2017) warned of “institutional freeze”, described as the way inflexible rules and routines can hinder innovation, and debated on using flexible instruments and experimental budgeting to overcome this barrier.

Orchestrating Capacities (5, 6, and 7)

A strong commitment and cross-departmental collaboration on a shared mission are essential for innovation. Potjer and Hajer (2021) call for mission-oriented, cross-departmental collaboration, guiding participants to consider how different agendas could be aligned in the integrated neighborhood approach. Westskog et al. (2022) emphasize that local governments can assume a connective role by bringing together policy frameworks, financial flows, initiatives, and stakeholders. This notion of municipalities as directors of networks may be regarded as orchestrating. Orchestrating and transformative capacities reflect the ability to address the organisational form that the municipality needs to adapt to realise the neighborhood transformation.

Context-Specific Challenge: Fragmented Ownership (11)

Elgendy et al. (2024) outlined that fragmented ownership complicates collective decision-making through financial, legal, social, and technical barriers. Fragmented ownership can slow urban renewal efforts by raising transaction costs and creating collective action problems unless there is sufficient facilitation and guidance (Adams et al., 2001).

By operationalizing theory in this way, the workshop content directly informed the municipality of Zwolle on how to implement the chosen strategy and to foster internal capacity for long-term transformative urban renewal. This careful preparation ensured that Workshop Two built directly on Workshop One's outcome while also serving the thesis's broader aim of exploring how Zwolle can evolve its governance approach.

5.4.2 Results of the Workshop

While conducting Workshop Two, there was also a time shortage due to a previous meeting of the municipality. Because the workshop got cut short and was not fully executed, follow-up interviews were held with the participants to discuss the points that were not discussed during the workshop itself. The findings of this workshop are organized into the same eleven thematic areas used in the handout, which can be found in Appendix 4. These thematic areas reflect the institutional capacities and governance conditions needed to enable a transformative urban renewal strategy in De Hogenkamp and how the municipality of Zwolle can shift its internal organisation to better support similar self-organized citizen initiatives. The workshop consisted of two municipal officials from the municipality of Zwolle and the same participant from De Hogenkamp who participated in Workshop One.

1. Leadership (and courage)

In the workshop, strong leadership was discussed as a fundamental requirement. While in the early stages of a transformative experiment such as De Hogenkamp, the municipality must act as a promoter of the initiative. Participants agreed that top-level support is necessary to overcome internal resistance and to allow deviations from standard rules. One participant stressed that municipal leadership should explicitly signal that *“breaking out of fixed frameworks is the intended approach”*, so that staff do not view experimental practices as negative performance but as a positive, supported endeavor. In other words, leaders must provide room for innovation, giving permission to break or bend standard policies when necessary. This kind of leadership courage sets the tone that transformative change is both authorized and encouraged from the very top of the organisation.

2. Change of discourse

Transformative governance also requires actively changing the dominant narrative surrounding the project. Hölscher et al. (2019) identify changes in the narrative as a core function of transformative governance. This involves creating a new vision that questions the existing norms and beliefs. This vision breaks through social and administrative barriers and better connects policy, experiments, and stakeholders (Hölscher et al., 2019). In the Hogenkamp case, participants noted that the prevailing discourse in the community has been focused on maintaining individual properties and regretting *“backlog maintenance.”* This object-level, problem-focused story needs to shift toward a collective, future-oriented narrative. One participant observed that stakeholders must decide whether to *“remain stuck in the old maintenance mindset or jointly choose a better, forward-looking course.”* The participants argued for reframing Hogenkamp's situation not as one of decline, but as a positive mission to make the neighborhood sustainable and liveable for the future. By telling a hopeful story of collaboration

and improvement, the municipality can inspire commitment and reduce resistance. The discourse should emphasize that upgrading the area ultimately benefits the current residents and builds local support for the transformation.

3. From “small-wins” to “big-wins”

The approach of “small-wins” as a stepping stone lowers risks, increases learning, and builds momentum so that modest successes ultimately cumulate in fundamental change (Bryson, 1988). Participants echoed this idea, emphasizing that a series of safe, incremental successes can pave the way for a transformative outcome. One participant explained that the first pilot project will inevitably make mistakes, the second will learn from those, and so on. It is important, however, to set guiding frameworks so that these small initiatives all “*move in the right direction*” and reinforce each other. In practice, De Hogenkamp itself can be seen as a “small-win” pilot for Zwolle. Lessons from this neighborhood experiment could be applied to other districts in the city or even nationally, meaning each minor victory here contributes to a larger win in urban transformation. Thus, the municipality should focus on enabling a series of linked “small-wins”, rather than one big leap, as a safer path toward the big win of a successful neighborhood renewal.

4. Focus on experimentation, treat this project as an “experiment”

Participants strongly highlighted the need to treat the Hogenkamp project explicitly as an experiment. In experimental governance, a project is not viewed as a final product but as a continuous learning process where the goal is not immediate success, but to take controlled risks and discover what works (Potjer, 2019). Participants argued that there must be organizational room for “trial-and-error” without fear of retribution. One participant explained the mindset as follows: “*It is okay to do something wrong here... whatever goes wrong, you simply do not repeat. That means treating this as an experiment.*” In practice, this means deviations from normal procedures should be permitted, and failures should be regarded as learning opportunities rather than a cause for punishment. For experimentation to succeed, a supportive culture and clear mandate are needed. Both political leaders and senior management should support the project’s experimental status. Participants stressed that if the municipality labels something an experiment, it must also act that way by tolerating mistakes and even paying “*tuition fees*” in the form of potential losses or inefficiencies as the price of innovation. By creating and utilizing space for experimentation, the organisation can innovate and adapt through the insights gained in De Hogenkamp. Making De Hogenkamp a protected sandbox for new approaches is seen as vital to stimulate transformative change.

5. Working across sectors on a higher “mission”

Working across sectors on a shared higher mission was identified as another key capacity. Initiatives like the case of De Hogenkamp cannot be solved by one department alone but demand an integrated approach. Potjer and Hajer (2021) recommend that different municipal departments and external partners collaborate on a common “mission” rather than separate tasks. In this case, participants defined the higher mission as developing a model to revitalize vulnerable neighborhoods and make them future-proof. Achieving this mission requires breaking down traditional departmental sectors within the municipality. As one participant put it, the municipality needs to move “*from sectors... to areas,*” meaning that area-specific goals must take precedence. This shift to an area-based approach is admittedly challenging. Participants noted it can trigger internal resistance, since staff might fear setting a precedent that undermines standard rules. Nevertheless, such an integrated, place-based approach is seen as crucial for a shared mission. To facilitate cross-sector collaboration, participants suggested focusing on goals rather than rules. Working goal-oriented per area encourages different departments (housing,

sustainability, public space, social affairs) to unite efforts toward the same mission, rather than each enforcing their own norms. In short, the organisation must create new forms of collaboration beyond sector boundaries, centered on a collective mission for the neighborhood's transformation.

6. Orchestrating in networks

Transformative governance also calls for the municipality to act as an orchestrator of networks, not just as a direct implementer. As Westskog et al. (2022) mentioned, local authorities can play a connecting role by bringing together policy frameworks, funding streams, initiatives, and stakeholders. In the De Hogenkamp project, participants indicated that the municipality should deliberately use this network leadership to enhance the project's impact. One aspect is leveraging financial resources. The city can strategically deploy its own budget as a catalyst to attract outside funding. For example, a participant suggested reserving a municipal budget for De Hogenkamp and using it to pull in co-financing from external sources such as national subsidies or innovative funding programs. By doing so, the overall investment in the neighborhood can be increased beyond what the city alone could provide. Additionally, the municipality should actively align the project with broader programmes and partners. Participants mentioned that connecting Hogenkamp to national initiatives and collaborating with other government levels can pay off. When a project is clearly positioned as an experimental, learning-oriented case, it becomes more attractive for higher-level support and funding. Network orchestration also involves linking substantive policy agendas across domains. Another idea brought up in the workshop was to involve external stakeholders who would benefit from the lessons of De Hogenkamp. In other words, *"let the students co-pay for the lesson,"* meaning those who stand to learn from this experiment could contribute resources to it. By broadening the network of contributors and learners, the first pilot can be better resourced, and subsequent initiatives elsewhere will face lower barriers. Overall, the municipality must skillfully orchestrate a network of public, private, and community actors around De Hogenkamp.

7. Structure and project organisation

A suitable structure and project organisation are required to carry out a transformative neighborhood renewal. Participants discussed what kind of organisational setup would enable thinking, steering, scaling, learning, accountability, and adaptation throughout the experiment. One idea was to establish a more formal, area-specific joint venture entity for De Hogenkamp. In such a structure, the municipality, housing corporations, the grid/network operator, and representatives of the neighborhood, such as homeowner associations, could all participate and co-steer the project. This would create shared ownership and joint decision-making power among stakeholders, rather than the municipality acting alone. By forming a dedicated multi-actor project organisation, all parties would have a seat at the table from the start, which helps align interests and share risks and rewards. Participants noted that attention must be paid not only to the project's implementation phase but also to the long-term management of the area after urban renewal. In traditional urban regeneration led by a single housing provider, that entity remains responsible for maintenance. In De Hogenkamp's case, no single actor exists due to the fragmented ownership of the homeowner associations. In summary, establishing a cohesive organisational framework in which the municipality and other partners (including residents) collaborate structurally is seen as important to sustain the transformation. Such a structure would ensure continuity of governance, funding, and accountability well beyond the initial project, enabling the transformative effort to truly stick over time.

8. Filling the “tactical gap”

The “tactical gap” refers to the missing link between high-level strategy and locally driven implementation. In many cases, there is a strategy at the top and action at the bottom, but no clear connector in between. In this case, participants identified an existing local mechanism that helps fill this gap. The local cooperative called “Wijbedrijf Dieze” operates in the area. This organisation currently functions as a bridge between municipal policy and practical execution, translating plans into action on the work floor. One participant emphasized that such an intermediary role needs to be clearly positioned and facilitated. The municipality should formally empower a joint area team or intermediary entity with a mandate from both the municipal side and the community side. The job of this team would be to connect the vision to the practice, ensuring that strategic objectives are continuously interpreted and adjusted in light of real-world conditions and feedback. To enable this, participants suggested pooling resources and personnel that are currently split. By bundling the means in one place, both the municipality and the representatives of the residents would have equal say over how time, money, and decisions are allocated, reflecting true co-creation rather than one-sided participation. *“You seek an equality in the approach to the area,”* one participant explained, contrasting this with the classic situation where the government independently decides and citizens only get to comment. Filling the tactical gap means establishing an intermediary layer, like a team or organisation, that has the trust and authority of both the government and the community. This ensures that top-down ambitions and bottom-up initiatives meet in the middle and remain aligned throughout the project.

9. Instrumentation with new instruments

Overcoming institutional inflexibility will require new, flexible instruments in the municipality’s toolkit. Transformative initiatives often struggle against what Termeer et al. (2017) describe as “institutional freeze”. To break through this, the city must use or create instruments that allow more flexibility and integrated action. In the case of De Hogenkamp, participants pointed to the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act as an opportunity to apply innovative instruments. For example, one option would be developing an environmental plan for the whole district, laying out a vision and set of conditions for De Hogenkamp’s renewal. This plan could replace existing rules, such as zoning plans or building regulations, with a single, integrated framework tailored to the neighborhood’s transformation. Another instrument highlighted was the use of an environmental programme under the new law. In an environmental programme, the municipality would set out the specific goals for the area, for instance, energy performance, climate adaptation targets, housing quality standards, and then use various tools in a flexible way to achieve them. This gives a guiding framework for the neighborhood while allowing deviation from traditional regulations in service of those goals. As one participant noted, by creating an area-focused framework, you *“get room to deviate from existing rules for the sake of the transformation.”* This flexibility is important because of the fragmented ownership. Overall, embracing new instruments and legal/planning tools will provide the needed flexibility to bypass institutional “lock-in”. By doing so, the municipality can adapt rules and resources to fit the innovative approach in De Hogenkamp, rather than forcing the project into outdated bureaucratic constraints (Termeer et al., 2017).

10. Utilizing lessons learned from the experiment for future municipal projects

For the transformative strategy to have a lasting impact, the municipality must consciously capture and utilize the lessons learned from the De Hogenkamp experiment in future projects. As Termeer et al. (2017) stated, knowledge sharing should not be an incidental side activity but rather an ingrained practice in the organisation. Transformative processes are only sustainable if the

organisation “*learns to adapt*”. Participants stressed that the municipality should build in mechanisms to systematically document, evaluate, and distribute what is learned in De Hogenkamp. This could involve keeping detailed project notes, having the project leader maintain a regular learning log, and organizing internal debriefings at key decision points. The key is to prevent valuable insights or costly lessons from being lost once the project concludes. The city must be willing to adjust its own policies and routines in response to these lessons. One participant described it as making “after-the-fact policy.” Instead of trying to design a perfect policy in advance, the idea is to refine or create policy after the experiment, based on what proved effective. If De Hogenkamp’s new approaches to community co-governance or flexible planning work well, these could be formalized into new municipal guidelines or structures. All participants agreed that dedicating time and space for organisational learning is vital. By actively reflecting and changing its course based on the experiment’s outcomes, the municipality of Zwolle can increase its transformative capacity. Making knowledge sharing a normal routine ensures that De Hogenkamp’s experiment improves the next initiatives, creating a culture of learning and adaptation within the municipal organisation.

11. The Hogenkamp case: working with fragmented ownership

This neighborhood’s housing is owned by many individual homeowners organized into multiple homeowner associations. Normally, urban renewal might involve a single housing corporation owning a large set of units, making it easier for the municipality to coordinate and implement changes. In De Hogenkamp, by contrast, “*each VvE has the freedom to make its own decisions*”. All participants acknowledged that this fragmented ownership structure can slow down decision-making and complicate reaching collective agreements, since theoretically every individual owner could choose differently. The municipality needs alternative ways to work with the fragmentation. The consensus was that the city should focus on facilitating and incentivizing the homeowners to act together, rather than trying to command or financially carry the whole burden. The municipality can support the cooperative of the homeowner associations that has formed by providing process guidance, technical advice, and even some funding for developing renovation plans, but it will not simply fill every financial gap for them. The private owners must also invest and take initiative. On the positive side, participants noted that the HoAs in De Hogenkamp have now united in a collaborative network, which makes it more similar to dealing with one large stakeholder. This simplifies communication and begins to mirror the traditional case of having a single counterpart, like a housing corporation. Still, operating in such a fragmented context is forcing the municipality to develop new collaboration models with private owners. One idea raised was to create a joint venture or cooperative vehicle where the municipality and all the HoAs each hold 50% of the decision-making power and ownership. This would bundle the numerous parties into one collective entity that can make unified decisions and act as one in negotiations. While this approach is still under consideration, it exemplifies the innovative governance arrangements that might be necessary. In any case, De Hogenkamp’s experience is resulting in valuable lessons on how to engage a dispersed group of stakeholders in a transformative project. Adapting to the realities of fragmented ownership by finding mechanisms to speak with one voice and maintain momentum is an essential capacity for the municipality in this and future neighborhood transformations.

5.5 Key Insights

The two workshops show that De Hogenkamp can be renewed most effectively through an integrated neighborhood approach in which the municipality coordinates and enables rather than just facilitates or distances.

The evaluation of the collaborative strategies in Workshop One favored a comprehensive approach that upgrades all flats together and aligns private and collective interventions within one coherent plan. This approach captures economies of scale, spreads fixed costs, and raises the chance that every homeowner association can act, which counters the long-standing effects of the fragmented ownership in De Hogenkamp. It also allows joint solutions to shared problems such as outdated infrastructure, parking pressure, and the quality of green space. The preferred approach balances ambition with feasibility. It promises to improve broad welfare involving the housing quality, inclusion, and environmental performance while justifying the municipal engagement and reducing risks. In this strategy, the municipality enables and stimulates homeowner associations by acting as facilitator and orchestrator. They align subsidies, ease regulations, and bring stakeholders together, which is far more convincing than a purely reactive path and more credible than variants that ask the municipality to assume heavy investment risks or a developer role, which would be hard to justify across districts. This approach scored highest against broad welfare criteria because it balances ambition with feasibility. This balance makes the integrated strategy impactful for De Hogenkamp and justifiable in the policy context.

Workshop Two revealed that this integrated strategy requires a transformation within the municipality itself. The municipality has to obtain strong municipal leadership and a supportive institutional culture. Leadership must be visible and show the courage and support to innovate and break out of fixed frameworks. Experimental practices need to be authorized, allowing deviations from the standard procedures and providing “trial-and-error” space. A change of discourse is part of this leadership task, where the discourse of backlogged maintenance and individual buildings should move to a shared future-oriented vision for a sustainable and livable urban renewal. This future-oriented vision of collaborative improvement unites the municipality, homeowners, and partners, and builds trust, thus stimulating the urban renewal of De Hogenkamp. The workshop also stressed a shift from sectoral governance to an area-based mission-oriented approach. An integrated neighborhood renewal cannot be obtained by any single department alone and must be done collectively across sectors. This underlines that the municipality must foster cross-departmental collaboration for the transformation of De Hogenkamp. To obtain this, the municipality must create new organizational structures or project teams that work across departments. By moving from sectors to areas, the municipality can prioritize area-based goals over individual department rules, which ensures all actions are aligned under the same strategy for the urban renewal of De Hogenkamp. Such a structure would pool resources, create shared ownership, and enable joint decision-making throughout implementation and long-term management. Filling the tactical gap between policy and practice is essential here. A coordinator that already operates in the district can be mandated and resourced to translate strategy into action on the ground and to safeguard genuine co-creation with residents.

An experimental approach is required. The workshops argue that De Hogenkamp should be treated as an experimental pilot and should be a learning environment, where the municipality pursues “small-wins”, building momentum, documenting lessons learned, and adjusting the course based on experience. In pilot projects, there are often mistakes made, which can be valuable if recorded properly and thus not repeated. Regular debriefs, well-documented lessons,

and incorporations of those lessons into guidance and procedures will make the experimental pilot of De Hogenkamp not only an urban renewal project but also an educational one. Flexible instruments and network orchestration must support the collaborative strategy. New planning tools, such as an environmental programme, can set out area-specific goals, delivering a guiding framework for the neighborhood and creating room to deviate from existing rules to enable and stimulate the urban renewal. Financially, the municipality can act as a promoter by reserving the targeted funds to attract national programs and private co-financing. Network orchestration can be done by connecting the project to wider initiatives and inviting partners who would benefit from the lessons, and possibly sharing the costs of these lessons. This increases the pool of resources and reduces barriers for later applications in other municipalities or projects.

In summary, the findings from these workshops revealed that the integrated neighborhood approach offers sustainable livability upgrades, economies of scale, and a way to overcome fragmented ownership, ensuring that all homeowner associations are included. However, the success of the integrated neighborhood renewal depends on a governance transformation within the municipality itself. By embracing leadership within the municipality of Zwolle for innovation, area-focused collaboration, an experimental mindset of “learning by doing,” and flexible network-focused project structures, the municipality of Zwolle can effectively implement the preferred collaboration strategy. These insights provide a roadmap, not only for De Hogenkamp but also for other municipalities on how they can support and stimulate self-organized citizen initiatives, such as De Hogenkamp.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

6.1 Conclusion

6.1.1 Answering sub-questions

Sub-Research Question 1

How do municipalities in the Netherlands approach homeowner associations in post-war physically degraded neighborhoods, and what policy instruments are available to stimulate urban renewal?

Interviews with Dutch municipalities reveal that they most often take on a facilitative, enabling role when collaborating with self-organized initiatives of homeowners. Rather than imposing top-down plans, municipalities act as partners and coordinators, focusing on building the capacity of homeowner associations, fostering learning, and establishing mutual trust. A participatory and adaptive governance style is favored over a directive one. Municipalities support HoAs by using soft instruments such as help desks for technical advice, educational workshops, process coaches, and even informal “HoA cafés” to share knowledge. These soft tools stimulate homeowners to take action. These soft tools are complemented by the strategic use of financial instruments. A range of policy instruments is available: local governments leverage national and European funds targeted at sustainability and housing, and introduce tailor-made local incentives to supplement these funds. Common examples include subsidies for technical building scans, grants for energy-saving measures, and dedicated low-interest loans for renovation projects. Hard instruments are applied in a way that respects the independence of HoAs. The municipality aims to stimulate and de-risk projects without taking control. A municipality might fund initial feasibility studies or provide loan guarantees, but it rarely engages in direct co-investment in private buildings. Only a few municipalities participate in HoAs themselves. Instead, municipalities encourage investment by others and sometimes pursue creative arrangements like public-private partnerships. One such solution is inviting a private developer to invest in the neighborhood under clear agreements, for example, by allowing additional new housing development whose profits help finance the renovation of existing flats. Municipalities also use flexible regulatory instruments to stimulate renewal. Under the new Omgevingswet, they can adapt zoning rules or grant exemptions so that innovative renovations and the addition of new apartments can proceed within an inclusive, sustainable vision for the area. All the gathered instruments from the interviews with other municipalities are summarized in Table 1-4 in Chapter 4, and Table 5 includes the most promising instruments.

In summary, Dutch municipalities approach post-war physically degraded neighborhoods by acting as enablers: combining supportive guidance with incentives and regulatory flexibility. This collaborative approach aligns stakeholders and resources early on, involves residents in decision-making, and prioritizes dialogue over enforcement to build local ownership of the renewal effort. Such an approach has been found to stimulate sustainable urban renewal in these neighborhoods by jointly achieving improvements that are widely supported and long-term viable.

Sub-Research Question 2

How can these approaches be translated into suitable collaboration strategies for the municipality to facilitate the self-organized citizen initiative of De Hogenkamp?

Building on the insights from Sub-Research Question 1, the research translated general approaches into tailored collaboration strategies for De Hogenkamp. The essence of this translation was to design strategies in which the municipality would coordinate and enable collective action among the 22 separate HoAs in De Hogenkamp, rather than taking a purely distancing role. In practice, this meant formulating an integrated neighborhood approach that unifies efforts across all apartment complexes. The study found that encouraging all HoAs to act together under one coherent renewal plan is key to overcoming the fragmented ownership structure of the area. Using the facilitative principles identified in other cities, the municipality of Zwolle can serve as an orchestrator: aligning subsidies and technical support for all homeowner associations simultaneously, easing procedures, and bringing all stakeholders into a joint planning process. Rather than approaching renovations one HoA at a time, a suitable strategy would involve coordinating renovations so that every flat is upgraded within a coordinated program, capturing economies of scale and ensuring no HoA is left behind. The approaches observed nationally, such as providing process guidance, educational support, and financial incentives, were consolidated into a strategy that fits De Hogenkamp's context.

The consensus among local stakeholders was that the municipality's role should be to empower the cooperative network of HoAs by supporting it with expertise, funding for planning, and regulatory flexibility. By adapting national best practices to the local context, the research designed collaboration strategies that allow the self-organized initiative in De Hogenkamp to be scaled up and supported through active municipal facilitation and the use of hard and soft instruments found in Sub-Research Question 1. The result is tailored strategies that can now be assessed by the municipality.

Sub-Research Question 3

Which municipal participation/facilitation strategy is preferred by the municipality of Zwolle to support the self-organized initiative of De Hogenkamp, as assessed on criteria rooted in the literature?

Through a structured evaluation in Workshop one, which compared possible collaboration strategies, the preferred strategy for Zwolle emerged, Strategy 1a, Integrated neighborhood approach. Municipal participants of Workshop One assessed various strategies based on criteria derived from broad welfare theory and mission-oriented municipal goals, and found that this comprehensive, coordinated strategy scored the highest on these criteria. The chosen strategy is characterized by upgrading all 22 flats together under one plan and closely aligning private investments with public support measures.

Participants favored this approach because of the lower investment risk than the other strategies, and they acknowledged that the investment is more legitimate. This complete neighborhood transformation addresses not only the physical condition of the apartments but also shared issues like outdated infrastructure, parking pressure, and the quality of green spaces in De Hogenkamp. It remains feasible and realistic by pooling projects and resources. This approach increases the chance that every HoA can undertake renovations and justifies an active municipal role without requiring the city to assume unsustainable financial risks.

In this enabler and orchestrator strategy, the municipality coordinates interventions and provides a space where all HoAs operate, rather than simply reacting to individual plans. The evaluation found this much more convincing than a passive "distancing role" approach and more credible than a strategy where the city itself would invest heavily or act as a developer. Strategies demanding that the municipality carry the full burden or impose top-down solutions were hard to

justify and less likely to gain broad support. By contrast, the preferred strategy's strength is that it leverages the collective effort of homeowners with strategic municipal support. This approach maximizes broad welfare outcomes (improvements in housing quality, inclusivity, and sustainability) while distributing responsibilities appropriately.

As a result, Workshop 1, Strategy 1a, the Integrated neighborhood approach, came out above the other strategies. The participants of the municipality of Zwolle agreed that acting as an enabler who coordinates actions, eases regulations, and aligns incentives across the whole neighborhood is the most effective way to support the De Hogenkamp initiative in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

Sub-Research Question 4

What institutional capacities and governance conditions are required within the municipality of Zwolle to implement this transformative urban renewal strategy in De Hogenkamp?

Implementing the preferred strategy in De Hogenkamp will require significant institutional capacities and changes within the municipality of Zwolle. Workshop Two functioned as a reflective exercise and revealed that a governance transformation inside the municipal organization is necessary for success.

Strong and visible municipal leadership is needed where the municipality shows courage and support to innovate beyond traditional governance. By shifting the discourse away from the negative problematic case of backlogged maintenance in De Hogenkamp, the municipality can actively promote a shared vision of a collective, future-oriented renewal mission. This shift in discourse unites the municipality, homeowners, and partners to achieve common goals and creates trust.

A supportive institutional culture and structure are vital. The workshop highlighted that the municipality has to transition from traditional sectoral governance to an area-based mission-oriented approach. By moving "from sectors to areas," the municipality can prioritize the initiatives' integrated goals over individual objectives of separate departments, aligning all actions under one strategy.

The municipality has to enhance its capacity for experimentation and learning. The preferred strategy should be seen as an experimental pilot, where a new approach is encouraged, and mistakes are treated as opportunities to learn. Providing room for "trial-and-error" is needed for more flexible procedures, while ensuring deviations from standard rules are authorized to support experimental governance. This also means instituting mechanisms for continuous learning, like regular debriefs, documentation of lessons learned, and the incorporation of those lessons into updated policies and practices. In essence, organizational agility and openness to change are key governance conditions.

Additionally, resource mobilization and network orchestration capacities are required. The municipality needs to be able to assemble financial resources, setting aside targeted funds that can be used to attract national subsidies or co-financing from private actors for the project. The network capacity should be improved by connecting to regional sustainability programs or knowledge networks. This enables the self-organized initiative of De Hogenkamp to connect to broader initiatives and partnerships. Expanding the pool of partners and investors brings in more resources and also shares the costs and benefits of innovation. This allows the municipality to justify and continue this initiative. In Workshop Two, an organizational mechanism was recommended through appointing a district coordinator or project leader who operates at the

neighborhood level. This person or team would fill the “tactical gap” between high-level policy and on-the-ground action, translating the integrated strategy into concrete steps, and ensuring genuine co-creation with residents during implementation.

In summary, the preferred collaboration strategy demands that the municipality of Zwolle develop transformative governance capacities. Including visionary leadership, cross-department collaboration structures, an experimental mindset, and strong coordination and networking mechanisms will help stimulate the urban renewal of De Hogenkamp successfully.

6.1.2 Answering the main question

Main Research Question:

How can the municipality of Zwolle strategically collaborate with the self-organized initiative of the homeowner associations in De Hogenkamp to stimulate inclusive and sustainable urban renewal?

Based on a (broad) literature study and interviews with the municipality of Zwolle as well as 10 other municipalities, we have come to a (normative) advice that the municipality should act as a facilitator and orchestrator, acting as a partner and coordinator, empowering the self-organized citizen initiative. This advice is grounded in both literature and evidence from the interviews and workshops, showing that this approach is most effective for achieving an inclusive, sustainable transformation while dealing with fragmented ownership.

By coordinating a single neighborhood program, supplying the necessary financial, technical, and regulatory support to lower barriers for action, and simultaneously reforming its internal governance, the municipality can ensure that all 22 HoAs transform under one plan, achieve economies of scale, and prevent HoAs from being left behind, respecting the independence of the HoAs while stimulating them.

Through this dual strategy of external partnership and internal transformation, the role of the municipality becomes one of empowering and stimulating the self-organized citizen initiative to achieve a broad, long-term neighborhood transformation that improves living conditions for all residents in a sustainable way, while also achieving municipal goals. This strategy deals with the barriers of fragmented ownership, such as skepticism on energy investments and short-term perspectives, ensuring all residents benefit from improvements and minimizing the disparities within the HoAs.

The municipality can bundle financial incentives, starting with national (and European) subsidies, grants, or low-interest loans, supplementing them with local, tailor-made financial incentives, to ensure HoAs have access to funds for the needed renovations. By combining these incentives with technical advice, capacity is built for all HoAs to participate. Deploying flexible planning tools under the new Omgevingswet, such as the environmental programme, the municipality can set out area-specific goals, facilitating the neighborhood-wide transformation approach.

Departments within the municipality need to collaborate closely under the shared goal of urban renewal of De Hogenkamp, which requires an internal transformation of the municipal organization, including a cross-departmental mission-oriented approach. To facilitate this approach, the municipality needs a strong and visionary leadership emphasizing support beyond traditional governance and calling for a change in discourse to promote this mission-oriented approach actively. This leadership can embrace the experimental mindset needed to treat De Hogenkamp as a pilot project, encouraging innovation and giving “trial-and-error” space to learn

from the pilot and help the organization adapt and strengthen facilitating capacities in urban renewal initiatives.

To summarize, the municipality of Zwolle can stimulate inclusive and sustainable urban renewal in De Hogenkamp by combining strategic collaboration with governance transformation. This strategy ensures that all HoAs are part of the urban renewal and benefit from improved living conditions that include safer, more energy-efficient apartments and a more livable environment while also advancing the municipal goals, such as housing quality and energy transition. The facilitator and orchestrator approach addresses challenges of physical degradation and fragmented ownership while simultaneously creating a model for collaborative renewal, which can be replicated in other municipalities and neighborhoods. This strategic collaboration of the municipality of Zwolle with the homeowner associations can transform De Hogenkamp into a sustainable, future-proof neighborhood and function as an example for other municipalities on how to stimulate homeowner associations towards inclusive and sustainable urban renewal.

6.2 Discussion

6.2.1 Contribution to Theory

The complexities of coordinating multiple homeowner associations with fragmented ownership were investigated in this research. Elgendy et al. (2024) described common barriers in this fragmentation, including financial, legal, social, and technical barriers, which complicate collective decision-making. Adams et al. (2001) observed that aligning independent owners raises the coordination costs and creates collective action challenges, which in turn slow the renewal process. This study contributes to these barriers by providing empirical evidence of governance difficulties in the fragmented ownership context and the importance of tailor-made facilitative strategies to overcome these obstacles.

The findings of this research show how the municipality has a role as orchestrator and facilitator in the collaboration with De Hogenkamp's initiative to align diverse actors and resources. This role combination is in line with the concept of orchestrating capacities in transformative governance, which emphasizes assembling and guiding multi-actor networks toward a shared goal (Hölscher et al., 2019). The case of De Hogenkamp revealed an orchestrating role of the municipality in the discussion, where the municipality actively suggests coordinating the separate homeowner associations, fostering communication and alignment, while empowering the initiative with support and guidance. This thesis translated theory into practice by illustrating how a local government can implement orchestrating capacities. It proposes an area-oriented renewal pilot project approach that organizes internal cross-departmental collaboration within the municipality and externally orchestrates stakeholder alignment among various stakeholders, particularly the HoAs, combined with a facilitative approach.

The study also operationalized the transformative governance capacities observed by Hölscher et al. (2019). These capacities were made practical in this research as guiding principles. By applying this framework to a real-world case, this thesis demonstrated how the capacities can be identified and strengthened by strategic action. This suggests that transformative governance theory helps the municipality to transform the organisation internally, enabling and stimulating the neighborhood renewal.

The concept of broad welfare criteria, multi-dimensional well-being measures beyond GDP (Rijpma et al., 2017), was used to guide the municipal collaboration strategy decision-making. Putters (2024) suggested that steering on broad welfare requires integrating social, ecological,

and economic values into policy. This thesis demonstrated how this approach can be made observable by incorporating broad welfare dimensions, such as quality of life, social cohesion, and ecological sustainability, as a theoretical foundation for the evaluation criteria for the renewal strategies. This practical use of broad welfare theory in this thesis demonstrates how this concept can function as a compass for strategy-making and evaluation, as suggested by Raspe (2024). By this demonstration, the thesis contributes an example of how municipalities can navigate real projects while maintaining societal well-being goals (Putters, 2024; Rijpma et al., 2017). This reflects the mission-oriented approaches described by Mazzucato (2021) in which governments should set bold, time-bound, cross-sectoral challenges to manage experiments with the purpose of learning to achieve public outcomes.

Finally, a valuable theoretical implication is the effect that the self-organized citizen initiative has on the municipality. This case revealed that a self-organized citizen initiative can stimulate internal transformation within the municipality's organisation. An innovative, bottom-up project like De Hogenkamp can prompt the municipality to reassess its own structure and become more aware of its governance. This suggests that the theory of collaborative governance has a feedback loop in which municipalities shape self-organized citizen initiatives, and in turn, these initiatives transform the municipalities.

The thesis contributes to the theory by documenting this reflexive governance process, showing concretely how citizen-led innovation can act as a catalyst for municipal change. In summary, the research enhances theoretical understanding by demonstrating that empowering and stimulating self-organized citizen initiatives for urban renewal can lead to mutual transformation, enabling communities to advance while transforming government practices and capacities.

6.2.2 Reflection

This thesis has several limitations that must be acknowledged. This research was based on a single in-depth case study of De Hogenkamp's self-organized citizen initiative, which restricted the applicability of the findings to other contexts. The case provided context-specific insights into municipal collaboration with homeowner associations, but this study can not be compared to all other post-war physically degraded neighborhoods in the Netherlands. While adding data from ten other municipalities in the Netherlands, two Zwolle officials, and the workshops with the municipality of Zwolle provided additional breadth and comparative insights, the data is still relatively small and should be seen as exploratory.

Municipalities demonstrated a strong willingness to participate in the interviews, responding quickly due to the research's societal relevance. Even municipalities that could not participate in the interviews expressed interest in receiving the research outcomes, underscoring the importance of this study.

Qualitative methods were employed to uncover institutional dynamics and the perspectives of key actors. Therefore, interview and workshop data were shaped by the perspectives of participants. The findings can still reflect biases of interviewees, to give their municipality a favorable light, while the dominant voices in the workshop were somewhat mitigated by finishing the second half of Workshop Two within separate interviews (due to unforeseen circumstances).

The workshops with the municipality of Zwolle provided valuable opportunities for designing collaboration strategies, despite the limited participation of municipal officials. These outcomes only reflect a small group of actors who were already involved with the self-organized citizen initiative. A wider range of participants across different municipal sectors might have revealed

new barriers or conflicting goals. In light of this, the workshop results should be seen as a pilot of collaborative strategy-making.

The treatment of financial feasibility stayed conceptual in this research. Financial aspects were acknowledged as critical for the renewal. However, the thesis did not include a cost-benefit analysis or financial modeling, as this was part of the action research conducted by ToekomstSterk (Weytingh et al., 2024).

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this thesis and its contributions to the theory suggest several recommendations for future research. Future comparative research could investigate how similar cases of self-organized citizen initiatives are addressed through municipal collaboration in various contexts. This would help to understand findings from this research and analyze what is context-specific to the case of De Hogenkamp. This comparative research can improve the applicability of transformative governance theory by examining how collaborative outcomes are influenced by different institutions or communities.

Future studies could investigate how municipalities can integrate approaches to self-organized neighborhood renewal into their municipal policy. This thesis employed a transformative governance framework, allowing future research to observe the conditions under which this approach can be applied.

Policy research would be valuable in revealing how municipalities adopt and sustain collaboration strategies, as well as examining how broad welfare indicators can be integrated into mainstream planning and evaluation processes. This would align with the transition from pilot project findings to standard practice, which could provide valuable insights into governance transformation, thus learning from pilots.

Another future research subject recommendation is identifying which specific policy instruments or bundles are most effective in stimulating and supporting self-organized citizen initiatives similar to De Hogenkamp. Table 5 in Section 4.5 summarizes the most promising instruments, as identified through interviews, that municipalities can use to support and stimulate these initiatives. Figure 3 then transforms this into a roadmap for municipalities to use. This recommended research could utilize soft and hard tools as two distinct thematic types of instruments to assess the impact of soft tools, which facilitate and support, and hard tools, mostly focused on financial aid and regulations. Dividing these tools into thematic types of instruments enables the assessment of their relative impact on motivating self-organized citizen initiatives, allowing for the combination of them into optimized bundles to stimulate self-organized citizen initiatives for sustainable urban renewal.

The operationalization of transformative governance capacities presented in this thesis, as applied in Workshop Two, could be utilized in future research within municipal domains to extend its theoretical contribution and further develop the transformative, stewarding, unlocking, and orchestrating capacities. The three municipal roles of directing, facilitating, and distancing, corresponding to the archaeological layers described by Poulsen (2007), are examined in this thesis and can be used to investigate the practical impact of these roles and their influence on the success of self-organized citizen initiatives.

Overall, future research should focus on the connection between theory and practice by examining how transformative governance frameworks can be applied in various municipal contexts to enhance our understanding of self-organized citizen initiatives and collaboration strategies that contribute to their success.

6.3.2 Recommendations for Practice

Based on the results of this research, the following recommendations are proposed.

Integrated Project Team:

The municipality could establish an integrated project team that brings together staff from key departments, such as housing, planning, social services, and sustainability, to coordinate the urban renewal initiative. This integrated team can break down the fragmentation in the municipality, ensuring a shared vision across sectors. This approach enables the municipality to address the challenges in De Hogenkamp and also provides residents with a clear point of contact within the municipality, thereby improving communication.

Create an Environmental Programme:

By utilizing the new Omgevingswet to create an environmental programme, the municipality can designate an area, such as De Hogenkamp, as a focused renewal zone with clear goals. This shows a long-term commitment from the municipality and provides a structured approach, building trust with the homeowner associations.

Comprehensive Support Package to HoAs:

Offering comprehensive support packages to homeowner associations stimulates and supplies them with the resources and knowledge needed to implement their urban renewal efforts. These packages include capacity-building assistance, such as technical advice, financial support in the form of small grants or subsidies (bundled from national and European financial sources and supplemented with local funds), and assistance in connecting with external partners.

Foster Inclusive Participation in Fragmented Ownership:

Ensuring that all homeowner associations participate in the urban renewal process, as well as all members within each association, and that no one is excluded due to any barriers, is vital. The fragmented ownership nature of this initiative complexifies this due to the internal fragmentation of homeownership. An active strategy is recommended for the municipality. Diverse preferences, free-rider behavior, and financial capacities are barriers that often slow decision-making within homeowner associations. By providing an accessible and transparent collaboration process, the municipality can support homeowner associations and guide them through the financial, legal, technical, and social barriers associated with fragmented ownership.

Experimenting, Learning, and Adapting:

The municipality of Zwolle should treat the self-organized citizen initiative of De Hogenkamp as a pilot project, treated as an experiment with the purpose of learning. During the pilot, reflection and evaluation on what works and what does not is vital to adjust strategies and later adopt the lessons learned into effective approaches within the organization. By ensuring lessons are actually adopted, the municipality improves its ability to collaborate with self-organized citizen initiatives.

Recommendations for Other Municipalities

Other municipalities in the Netherlands that face similar challenges with homeowner associations and urban renewal of post-war physically degraded neighborhoods can draw

lessons from this case study. In Section 4.5, the most promising instruments for municipalities are summarized in Table 5, which they can use to act in a facilitative and orchestrating role, stimulating self-organized citizen initiatives. The roadmap visualized in Figure 3 can help guide the municipality through the process of creating its own collaboration strategy by using the most promising instruments, resulting in a pilot-based approach. By treating these initiatives as pilots for experimentation and learning, other municipalities in the Netherlands develop an adaptable governance practice.

The evaluation criteria used in Workshop 1 can be applied by other municipalities in the Netherlands to assess their own collaboration strategies. Using the guiding principles from Workshop 2, municipalities can discuss their institutional capacities to identify the necessary changes within their organisation to translate their collaboration strategy into an actionable plan. By utilizing the evaluation criteria and guiding principles, the municipality ensures that its collaboration strategy is both context-specific and feasible within its organisation.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Interviewed Municipalities

Nr.	Municipality	Date
1	Zwolle	22 April 2025
2	Zwolle	22 April 2025
3	Eindhoven	23 April 2025
4	Maastricht	23 April 2025
5	Assen	24 April 2025
6	Gouda	24 April 2025
7	Haarlemmermeer	28 April 2025
8	Delft	28 April 2025
9	Leiden	29 April 2025
10	Enschede	29 April 2025
11	Rotterdam	1 May 2025
12	Utrecht	8 May 2025

Appendix 2: Interview Guide (English)

INTERVIEW GUIDE – MUNICIPALITIES IN THE NETHERLANDS

Formal Introduction

Good afternoon ...,

First of all, I would like to thank you for taking the time to do this interview.

My name is Niels van den Berg, and I am a master's student in Spatial Planning at Radboud University in Nijmegen.

Before we begin, I would like to explain the purpose of this conversation briefly. I am conducting research into a case study of an outdated neighbourhood with overdue maintenance, where a residents' association has taken the initiative to renovate the neighbourhood, and how the municipality can support this initiative. The graduation research is structured in two phases.

Phase 1: Gaining insight into how municipalities deal with outdated neighbourhoods and many owners' associations (and therefore also private owners and small investors/landlords) in order to revitalise these neighbourhoods and stimulate the energy transition.

Phase 2: Gaining insight into how the municipality of Zwolle can support the self-organised initiative of owners' associations and thus enable neighbourhood improvement.

With this interview, I want to gain insight into how other municipalities in the Netherlands approach similar situations, identify what policy instruments (e.g., capping) and financial instruments (e.g., heat network subsidies) are available and used, and learn about your personal experiences in these types of situations. Based on the findings, I will design and evaluate collaboration strategies that the municipality of Zwolle could implement.

I will use statements from the interviews, but the thesis will not clearly indicate which interviewee said what. May your name be mentioned at the back of the thesis in the list of interviewees? (If not, may the name of the municipality be mentioned, and will I then refer to you as “a policy officer”?) (If not, the interview will be anonymous.)

The interview data will only be stored and analysed by me, and the findings will be presented anonymously in my research.

Before we begin, would you mind if I record this conversation for research and transcription purposes?

This interview is entirely voluntary, and you are free to stop at any time. If you would prefer not to answer a particular question, please let me know.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

The Interview

Background

1. What is your role within the municipality?
2. What is your experience with neighbourhood transitions and ageing neighbourhoods?
3. Do you have experience with owners' associations in combination with the energy transition and neighbourhood renewal?
4. How big is the challenge in your municipality of ageing neighbourhoods with overdue maintenance or infrastructure?

SIMILAR CASES

1. Do you know of any examples of self-organised initiatives related to neighbourhood renewal and sustainability?
 - a. Similar to the case in Zwolle?
 - b. What were the main opportunities and challenges?
2. What role did the following actors play:
 - a. Homeowners
 - b. Small landlords
 - c. Housing associations
 - d. Homeowners' associations
 - e. Other stakeholders, such as residents' groups or developers
3. Do you think that homeowners' associations' lack of knowledge about real estate is a cause of deferred maintenance?
 - a. How can this be improved?

Instruments and Resources

The tables below list instruments and resources that can be used to facilitate and stimulate neighbourhood renewal. Are you aware of any important instruments or resources that are missing from the following tables?

1. Which instruments has your municipality used most often?
 - a. Do you know of any examples of areas that have switched from gas in a targeted manner?
2. How are these instruments used?
 - a. Do you know of any areas or other examples?

1. Inventory of relevant financial instruments

Supplemented by interviews and document analysis:

Financial Instruments	Description
Subsidy	Sustainability improvement for Homeowner Associations (HOAs)
Subsidy	District heating connections
Subsidy	Energy transitions
Fund or loan schemes	Municipal sustainability loans
Fund or loan schemes	Green investment funds
Taxes and levies	Lower property tax for sustainable investments
Taxes and levies	Future property value tax (Tax Increment Financing)
Guarantees	Municipal guarantee for loans

Municipal investment	Co-financing
Municipal investment	Purchase, finance, and operate directly
Housing Fund	Supports municipalities in outdated and vulnerable residential areas
National Insulation Programme (NIP)	Financial support for insulation
Heat Fund loan for HOAs	Offers loans for sustainability (insulation and gas-free)
Support programmes for HOAs	Courses or meetings
Loan for deferred maintenance	Available to all HOAs
Home Equity Release Loan	Loan to use home equity
European subsidies	Subsidies aimed at innovation, collaboration, and climate goals (complex to apply for)
DIY subsidy	Subsidy for material costs (self-executed work)

1. Inventory of relevant environmental law instruments and spatial framework instruments

Supplemented by interviews and document analysis:

Environmental Law Instruments	Description
Environmental Vision	Strategic municipal long-term vision for the living environment
Environmental Plan	Legally binding document for spatial use (replaces zoning plan)
Environmental Programme	Document with concrete measures and projects
Out-of-Plan Environmental Activity (BOPA)	Custom permit outside the applicable environmental plan
Spatial Framework Instruments	Description
Building/zoning regulations	Allowing or refusing rooftop extensions or infill development
Building/zoning regulations	Limiting or increasing building height
Building/zoning regulations	Changes of function/use
Building/zoning regulations	Changing the minimum residential floor area
Building/zoning regulations	Mandatory storage space (public area)
Building/zoning regulations	Changing parking standards/shared mobility
Sustainability/energy policy	Mandatory energy-neutral construction (net-zero buildings)
Sustainability/energy policy	Promote or require district heating systems
Sustainability/energy policy	Promote gas-free neighbourhoods
Area-focused development	Improve infrastructure/facilities
Accelerated permit procedures	Shorten objection and appeal procedures
Accelerated permit procedures	Pre-approve standard (construction) plans
Plot boundary change	Due to external wall insulation (+20 cm encroachment beyond building line)
Mixed-use function	For energy use (in relation to peak load)

2. Inventory of ownership structures

Supplemented by interviews and document analysis:

Ownership Structures	Description
Land Development	Development and investment in an area are recouped over time
Area Cooperative	Collaboration between residents and HOAs (joint management and investment)
Housing Cooperative	An association formed by residents who collectively own, develop or manage property
Mixed Ownership in HOA	A combination of social rental and owner-occupied housing
Recycling of Cash Flows	Reinvesting investments through ownership or leasehold
Reinvestment Agreement	Allowing rooftop extensions under the condition of reinvestment
Genossenschaft	Collective organisation focused on affordable housing, long-term management, and self-organisation
Loan-for-Use Agreement	For example, for solar panels

COOPERATION AND DECISION-MAKING

1. How do you cooperate with residents, owners' associations or other private parties? Are there examples where risks were shared?
2. How does your municipality organise participation with owners' associations?
 - a. Discussions with boards?
 - b. Surveys or working groups?
3. How are self-organised initiatives handled in decision-making?
4. How do you prevent preferential treatment of specific neighbourhoods? (Spatial Justice)
5. How are conflicting interests, such as subsidies and private investment, weighed up?
6. What went well in previous projects, and what did not?
7. Do you know colleagues at other municipalities who have valuable insights on this subject and would be open to an interview?

Formal Closing

Thank you for sharing your insights! To conclude, based on your experience, what do you think is the best approach for the municipality of Zwolle to take in order to ensure effective urban renewal in collaboration with the self-organised initiative of De Hogenkamp?

After this interview, I will transcribe and analyse the conversation. If anything needs to be clarified, may I contact you again?

Before we conclude, do you have any questions for me or thoughts about the interview itself?

Thank you again for your time! Have a nice day.

Appendix 3: Workshop 1 Hand-out (English)

Explanation of assessment criteria

1. Investment risk

How much financial risk do the strategies entail (especially for the municipality)? Consider uncertainties in costs, revenues, payback period or financing security.

2. Sustainable heat supply

The extent to which the strategy contributes to a future-proof, sustainable heat supply for the neighbourhood, such as a connection to a heat network.

3. Heat stress / Climate adaptation

The extent to which the strategy includes measures that protect the neighbourhood against climate change. Think of greening (sedum roofs), water storage, shaded areas and insulation.

4. Chance of success in making all homeowner associations sustainable

The expected chance that all homeowner associations in Hogenkamp will become sustainable per strategy. Think of how the homeowner associations are influenced, stimulated and supported per strategy.

5. Liveability/quality

The impact of the strategy on the quality of life in the neighbourhood. Think of comfort, safety, social cohesion and the quality of public space (unsafe balconies, no lift, noise pollution).

6. Balanced housing supply

The contribution of the strategy to a balanced housing supply in terms of type, price and target group. Consider the ratio between social housing and owner-occupied homes.

7. Legitimacy of investment in priority area

The extent to which the strategy is justified as a public investment in a vulnerable neighbourhood where the urgency is high.

8. Number of additional homes

The number of additional new homes that will be realised in the strategy, for example, through adding extra storeys or infill development.

9. Parking pressure

The impact of the strategy on the availability of parking spaces.

10. Knowledge gained from innovation

The knowledge gained through an innovative and groundbreaking strategy can also be applied in other municipalities. Think, for example, of an area or heat cooperative.

Weighting of the Criteria

A total of 100 points must be allocated to these criteria based on the importance of each criterion. Setting a maximum of 100 points forces us to prioritise.

Criteria	Weight (100)
1 Investment risk	
2 Sustainable heat supply	
3 Heat stress / Climate adaptation	
4 Chance of success in making all homeowner associations sustainable	
5 Liveability/quality	
6 Balanced housing supply	
7 Legitimacy of investment in priority area	
8 Number of additional homes	
9 Parking pressure	
10 Knowledge gained from innovation	
11	
12	

Strategy 1: Active participation (Route 4 without a heat network)

Strategy 1a, Integrated neighbourhood approach

In this strategy, the municipality takes on a coordinating role in an integrated neighbourhood renewal project. This allows various tasks to be combined, such as insulation, district heating, living environment, greenery and infrastructure. The municipality and homeowner association form a project organisation or neighbourhood team. The municipality will draw up a neighbourhood vision (Wijkplan de Hogenkamp) and link implementation budgets to this neighbourhood vision.

By making use of national and regional regulations, insulation, sustainability, and maintenance can be tackled together. For example, the Specific Grant for Local Insulation Measures can be used for this purpose. This can be used to finance insulation projects for poor-quality homes. The municipality will also help with process guidance and energy advisors for the homeowner association so that residents can prepare and supervise projects. Financial instruments such as the energy-saving loan from the National Heat Fund can be used to distribute sustainability costs across the homeowner association. In Eindhoven, for example, the Public Housing Fund was used to first prepare apartments for collective heating. Utrecht gave homeowners a supplement on top of the ISDE subsidy to encourage and support “group apartments”.

For the legal and spatial aspects of this project, the municipality can seek flexibility, for example, by lowering parking standards and allowing rooftop extensions/infill development. To make this neighbourhood approach feasible, a multidisciplinary project team will need to be set up with active communication with all homeowner associations.

This neighbourhood approach will ensure a coherent improvement for all homes. All homeowner associations will have equal opportunities to insulate their homes and access sustainable heating options. This will contribute to improving the quality of life and social cohesion.

An integrated neighbourhood approach with active investments will create economies of scale and a structured approach to improving an outdated/vulnerable neighbourhood. This approach requires a high level of commitment and investment from the municipality.

This strategy is in line with the measures in route 4 of the final report “Hogenkamp Chooses... For the Future!”. Here, renovation, sustainability and improvement of the living environment are combined. This integrated approach would offer economies of scale.

Advantages:

- Focus on municipal objectives
- Coherent improvement of homes and surroundings
- All homeowner associations are given equal opportunities through the neighbourhood vision

Disadvantages:

- High commitment and investment from the municipality
- Complex project management
- Requires high capacity from the municipality
- Intensive communication with all homeowner associations

Strategy 1b, Integrated neighbourhood approach with strategic land ownership

In this strategy, the municipality implements the same integrated neighbourhood approach as in strategy 1a, combined with an active land and real estate policy. The municipality (or a housing association under its control) takes possession of some of the poorly insulated apartments. This allows the municipality to participate in the homeowner association to steer the redevelopment/sustainability of the apartments. By participating in these homeowner associations, the municipality creates confidence that the project will go ahead. The municipality can also accelerate the projects, and the renovation of the neighbourhood will proceed more smoothly than through separate owners' association initiatives. It increases the investment burden on the municipality but reduces the uncertainty for individual residents.

In this strategy, the municipality acts as director and shareholder/developer and establishes public-private partnerships for joint investment.

In the Hogenkamp case, this can be done in two ways.

1. The municipality uses its pre-emptive right to purchase (poorly performing) apartments. By purchasing these homes, the municipality can guide the homeowner association, which can increase willingness to participate and boost confidence that projects will go ahead.
2. The municipality is building a new flat to create space for residents of the current flats. This flat will be used temporarily for the integrated neighbourhood approach, after which it will be sold to a housing association. Andere gemeenten in Nederland zitten soms ook in VvE's:

Rotterdam: “We are also involved in HoAs... as the municipality of Rotterdam, we sometimes purchase homes with the intention of making them more sustainable or combining them. We mainly do this in neighbourhoods where there are only very small homes.” 00:21:03

Assen: “The municipality itself is also a member of the owners' association. This means you have a completely different role as an owner, as you also have a say in what happens in the building.” 00:41:50

Advantages:

- Municipal influence through ownership (speeds up the process)
- Increases confidence and security among residents
- Redevelopment of outdated housing becomes more feasible

Disadvantages:

- Higher investment by the municipality
- Requires good coordination of public-private partnerships
- Resistance may arise among owners in the homeowner association (municipal property)
- Legally and financially very complex (municipality in multiple homeowner associations)

Strategy 1c, Integrated neighborhood approach with area cooperative (heating/management)

In this strategy, the municipality combines the integrated neighbourhood management from strategy 1a with the establishment of a regional cooperative for energy and maintenance. After the physical and energy-related measures have been implemented, the municipality transfers the management of the heat network to a residents' cooperative or a public-private cooperative enterprise. For example, by setting up a heating company together with local entrepreneurs and residents, 50% of which is owned by the municipality. The municipality then provides a start-up subsidy, a legal guarantee, and a low-interest loan, for example, through the Heat Fund, so that the cooperative can take over the project.

This strategy creates an independent body in the neighbourhood that will maintain the new facilities and possibly develop them further in the future. This strengthens the involvement of the neighbourhood. The municipality remains involved as a director, for example, by guaranteeing cash flows. The municipality takes the initiative and invests in the construction of the heat network and the necessary infrastructure, and helps to start up the cooperative. After completion, the cooperative assumes the risks, such as operation and management. By giving the cooperative management responsibility, the municipality remains financially involved only with the initial investment. All homeowner associations are given equal opportunities to access and adopt sustainable heating solutions. This contributes to an improvement in quality of life and social cohesion. Voor dit strategy is een heldere verdeling van taken noodzakelijk. Bewoners participeren op bestuursniveau in de coöperatie.

Other parties (network management) enter into contracts with the cooperative instead of with the municipality.

The final report “Hogekamp Chooses... For the Future!” frequently mentions the desire for more control in the neighbourhood and social cohesion. A cooperative ties in with this and offers opportunities for local ownership of, for example, heating facilities. The limited capacity of some homeowner associations can cause problems. This requires an intense start-up phase, and therefore guidance and legal support from the municipality before this cooperative can operate independently. The municipality can temporarily act as guarantor or invest via the Heat Fund.

Advantages:

- Municipality invests in a heat network (municipal objective?)
- Limited financial responsibility for the municipality after completion
- Strengthens long-term commitment

Disadvantages:

- High municipal investment in the start-up phase
- Operational and management risks require reliable governance in the cooperative
- Legally very complex (ownership, liability)

Strategy 2: Facilitating (Route 2)

Strategy 2a, Facilitating through combinations of regulations and process guidance

In this strategy, the municipality does not take a leading role, but actively supports the homeowner association by pooling support resources. Important national subsidies such as the Subsidy Scheme for Homeowner association (SVVE) allow an owners' association to apply for a subsidy for energy advice and process guidance. Through the SVVE, homeowner associations can also receive subsidies for insulation and heating measures. Through the ISDE subsidy (Investment Subsidy for Sustainable Energy), homeowner associations can obtain compensation for insulation and sustainable heating. The municipality can also refer to low-interest loans, such as the owners' association energy saving loan from the National Heat Fund. This combination, therefore, consists of advice and process guidance from the SVVE, investment subsidies such as the ISDE and low-cost loans.

The municipality's role here is primarily supportive and connecting. A project leader or sustainability team can be appointed to lead the process. The municipality can set up an energy desk or owners' association desk where homeowner associations can go with questions. The desk also provides free, independent advice on starting the project, including the necessary steps and available subsidies and loans. For the homeowner association, the municipality can call in internal or external experts who specialise in process guidance and can assist them.

The municipality facilitates and supports, but leaves it up to the homeowner association to take the initiative. The municipality does not decide which measures are taken and mainly provides support in the form of information and resources. The process supervisor helps the homeowner association with decision-making and planning. The homeowner association make the final decisions about the measures and is also responsible for financing.

The final report, "Hogekamp Chooses... For the Future!", makes it clear that there are significant differences between active and less active homeowner associations. This strategy offers process guidance and subsidy referrals. Subsidy options or low-interest loans can be provided through an owners' association desk or sustainability team.

- Sustainable Energy Investment Subsidy (ISDE)
- Subsidy for Making Homeowner Association More Sustainable (SVVE)
- National Insulation Programme/Specific Payment for Local Insulation Approach (NIP/SPUK-LAI)
- Home Equity Release Loan
- Loan for overdue maintenance
- Heat Fund as a loan for a homeowner association

However, this strategy may cause problems because the active homeowner association will start earlier, increasing parking pressure and possibly making it impossible to add extra floors later due to a shortage of parking space.

Advantages:

- Municipality provides support without taking control (lower risks)
- Accelerated implementation (through energy advice, quick scans, subsidy advice and guidance)
- Visible progress and yet a cheaper approach than strategies 1 a-c

Disadvantages:

- Results are less coherent than with the integrated neighbourhood approach
- Effectiveness varies between homeowner associations (active and inactive)
- The municipality must organise guidance (team/helpdesk/external advisors)

Strategy 3: Passive role (Route 1)

Strategy 3a, Homeowner associations are responsible for implementation

In this strategy, the municipality does not take on any additional responsibilities. The homeowner associations are fully accountable for sustainability measures. The municipality provides standard information, for example, via a website, and no additional subsidies or municipal funds are granted.

Without municipal input, not many homeowner associations will take measures themselves. As a result, housing quality and energy consumption can vary enormously within the neighbourhood, with only a slight improvement in energy labels. This means that the municipality's sustainability goals will not be achieved in this neighbourhood.

The homeowner associations bear all the risks, both technical and financial. The municipality only has its current role: supervising under existing regulations and applying for applicable national subsidies.

There is, therefore, minimal cooperation between the municipality and the homeowner association. At most, the municipality provides information on permit applications. This strategy does not require any additional capacity from the municipality and is therefore the “zero alternative”, whereby only existing regulations are used.

The final report “Hogenkamp Chooses... For the Future!” emphasises that coordination, cooperation and customisation are essential for the transformation of the neighbourhood. The “zero alternative” is therefore not desirable for the situation in De Hogenkamp.

Advantages:

- No additional effort or investment required from the municipality
- Homeowner associations are completely independent (no municipal coordination)
- No preferential treatment (Spatial Justice)

Disadvantages:

- Little/no progress in sustainability (energy labels remain low)
- Municipal targets are not achieved
- Dependent on own initiative

Assessing strategies based on criteria

- ++** = very positive effect
- +** = positive effect
- 0** = neutral or unknown
- = negative effect
- = very negative effect

Criteria	Strategy				
	1a	1b	1c	2a	3a
1 Investment risk					
2 Sustainable heat supply					
3 Heat stress / Climate adaptation					
4 Chance of success in making all homeowner associations sustainable					
5 Liveability/quality					
6 Balanced housing supply					
7 Legitimacy of investment in priority area					
8 Number of additional homes					
9 Parking pressure					
10 Knowledge gained from innovation					
11					
12					

Appendix 4: Workshop 2 Hand-out (English)

Strategy 1: Active participation (the preferred strategy)

Strategy 1a, Integrated neighbourhood approach

In this strategy, the municipality takes on a coordinating role in an integrated neighbourhood renewal project. This allows various tasks to be combined, such as insulation, district heating, living environment, greenery and infrastructure. The municipality and homeowner association form a project organisation or neighbourhood team. The municipality will draw up a neighbourhood vision (Wijkplan de Hogenkamp) and link implementation budgets to this neighbourhood vision.

By making use of national and regional regulations, insulation, sustainability, and maintenance can be tackled together. For example, the Specific Grant for Local Insulation Measures can be used for this purpose. This can be used to finance insulation projects for poor-quality homes. The municipality will also help with process guidance and energy advisors for the homeowner association so that residents can prepare and supervise projects. Financial instruments such as the energy-saving loan from the National Heat Fund can be used to distribute sustainability costs across the homeowner association. In Eindhoven, for example, the Public Housing Fund was used to first prepare apartments for collective heating. Utrecht gave homeowners a supplement on top of the ISDE subsidy to encourage and support “group apartments”.

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Advantages:

- Focus on municipal objectives
- Coherent improvement of homes and surroundings
- All homeowner associations are given equal opportunities through the neighbourhood vision

Disadvantages:

- High commitment and investment from the municipality
- Complex project management
- Requires high capacity from the municipality
- Intensive communication with all homeowner associations

Implementing “Transformative Governance” for this case within the municipality of Zwolle

Per section to discuss:

- Description of the ideal strategy for the implementation of this project in Zwolle.
- Enabling factors and barriers
- Possible consequences within the municipality

1. Leadership (and courage)

In the early stages of transformative experiments, it is crucial that the municipality acts as a “promoter”.

According to VanHoose and Bertolini (2023), the role of “promoter” seems particularly useful in initiating and legitimising radically new and potentially controversial experiments.

2. Change of discourse

According to Hölscher et al. (2019), a core function within Transformative Governance is changing the dominant narrative (discourse).

This involves actively working on a new vision that challenges existing norms, goals and beliefs. This new vision helps to break through social and administrative barriers and to establish a connection between policy, experiments and stakeholders (Hölscher et al., 2019).

3. From “small wins” to “big wins”

Instead of immediately focusing on large-scale changes (big wins) that involve many risks, Bryson (1988) recommends first focusing on smaller, achievable victories (small wins) that are interconnected.

This approach reduces risks, increases learning capacity and strengthens commitment, so that small successes ultimately lead to fundamental transformative change.

4. Focus on experimentation, treat this project as an “experiment”

In experimental governance, a project is not an end product but a learning process. The goal is not immediate “success” but to take controlled risks in order to discover what works and what does not (Potjer, 2019).

Potjer and Hajer (2021) describe experimentation as a “winding path from possible to feasible to common innovation”. It is crucial that experiments are supported from the top of the organisation; only then can a real learning and experimentation space be created.

- Put existing policy on hold, possibly set aside standards
- Learn lessons from this project, for which “tuition fees” may be paid
- Commitment from the top of the organisation
- Tolerance for mistakes, “Create and utilise space”

5. Working across sectors on a higher 'mission'

How can we ensure that this experiment is conducted in an “integrated” or “cross-sectoral” manner?

In order to truly tackle complex social challenges, it is necessary to connect sectors and policy areas. Potjer and Hajer (2021) recommend an approach in which different departments and partners work together on a shared “mission”.

- New forms of collaboration
- Shared vision (where do we want to go)
- Administrative space

6. Orchestrating in networks

In “Transformative Governance”, the municipality is not only an implementer but also a “Director of Networks”. Westskog et al. (2022) emphasise that local authorities can play a connecting role by bringing together policy frameworks, funding streams, initiatives and stakeholders (Orchestrating).

- Subsidies and resources
 - Identify
 - Link
 - Provide direction
- Alignment with national programmes
- Active cooperation with other authorities

Examples:

Link to multiple policy agendas (Eindhoven)

“The municipality of Eindhoven is willing to facilitate promising resident initiatives, but this is done within the framework of fairness and policy objectives.”

Linking to the national Natural Gas-Free Neighbourhoods programme (Leiden)

“It helps if a project is clearly positioned as experimental and educational, making it more attractive for national support.”

7. Structure and Project Organisation

How should the municipality be organised, and should there be some form of area-specific joint venture in place by January 2026?

In an area-specific joint venture, for example, the municipality, corporations, market parties and residents' organisations work together on a structural basis. This option offers ownership, joint control and flexibility.

8. Filling the “tactical gap”

The “tactical gap” is the missing link between strategic policy and operational implementation. For example, there is a vision at the top, action at the bottom, and no coordination between the two.

9. Instrumentation with new instruments (budgets, (government) subsidies, plans)

According to Termeer et al. (2017), “institutional freeze” is a major risk. Old rules, formats and budget lines hinder innovation. This can be broken by using “new flexible instruments”.

The Environment Programme, for example, can be used to approach integrated tasks in an area-specific manner and to link policy, implementation and resources.

10. Utilising the lessons learned from this experiment for future municipal projects

In order to utilise the lessons learned from an experiment for future projects, knowledge sharing should not be an incidental side issue, but rather an “ingrained practice” (Termeer et al., 2017). Transformative processes are only sustainable if the organisation “learns to adapt”.

What do you need to do to achieve this? (e.g. keep project minutes, ask the project leader to keep a monthly diary of “what went well and what was difficult in the past month”)

11. Hogenkamp case study specifically: Working with a fragmented group of land and property owners (with this initiative of cooperating homeowner association) is new.

The freedom of each homeowner association to make a different decision than the collective (due to fragmented ownership) makes this project more cumbersome and unpredictable for the municipality.