

Creating a suitable VAB-policy

A qualitative study into the extent to which the spatial instruments of the National Government are effective for municipalities and provinces to solve the problem with regard to vacant agricultural buildings

Original version



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Preface

As a Planning student, farmer's daughter and advisor at an agricultural advocacy organisation, I am closely involved in developments in the agricultural sector. One of the developments that I have followed closely for years is that of vacant agricultural buildings (VABs). It is important to me that many farmers are forced to stop business because it is no longer financially viable. In order to delve deeper into the subject of the creation and dissolution of VABs, I have dealt with this issue in this master's thesis. I am proud of the result, and I think that I have made both a social and scientific contribution.

I want to take this opportunity to thank a number of people who have helped me to complete my thesis. First of all, I thank my supervisor, also a member of the House of Representatives of the CDA (political party), Jaco Geurts, who gave me the opportunity for four months to take a unique look behind the scenes in The Hague and helped me when needed. I also want to thank Arjan de Kok, policy officer for the CDA, for his advice and interesting conversations. From Radboud University, I thank my thesis supervisor, Prof. Peter Ache, for the guidance and feedback.

Naturally, this research would not have been possible without the respondents who gave me input for my data collection, for which I am grateful. Finally, I thank my family, friends and fellow trainees who have given me the space and motivation to complete this Master's thesis.

I look back on a very fun, inspiring and educational period, and I look forward to my future experiences.

Sharona de Klerk
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Summary

The agricultural vacancy rate in the Netherlands has grown considerably in recent decades. Currently, 11 million square metres of agricultural buildings are vacant, and it is expected that this will increase by 9.7 million square metres in Gelderland and Noord-Brabant by 2030. In particular, this includes buildings that were built between 1970 and 2000 and therefore contain asbestos, which makes them expensive to demolish and difficult to reuse. The government has various spatial instruments that influence VABs (such as released agricultural buildings), but their effect has not yet been investigated. This study examines the effectiveness of government policy of preventing or resolving VAB problems on the basis of the experiences of those municipalities and provinces in which the problems are greatest. The main question of the study is: *To what extent are the preventive and curative spatial instruments of the central government effective for the provinces and municipalities with regard to solving the problems concerning released agricultural buildings?*

There are various reasons for the release of agricultural buildings. First, these include historical causes, such as soil type, religious background and agricultural type. VABs mainly arise in areas with sandy soils and where intensive livestock farming dominates. In addition, in the past, the government has ensured that companies that have been severely affected by swine fever were assisted in recovery with, among other measures, subsidies and schemes. This created an unhealthy entrepreneurial climate, as a result of which these companies later went bankrupt, and the buildings became vacant. The built-up type of these pig and poultry houses makes redevelopment difficult, partly because these houses contain asbestos. In addition, job changes are often a lengthy and costly process and have become a problem for municipalities because not all destinations are desirable. Market forces, scaling up, the increased number of environmental rules and emotional aspects are also mentioned as causes of the release of agricultural buildings. However, the main cause is described as settlement with the tax authorities in the event of business terminations.

A large number of VABs in an area has an effect on the liveability of the rural area: it ensures that young people move away and results in an increase in criminal activities and undermining.

Although the VAB problem is considered a social problem, the central government has no policy on the subject. There are, however, various spatial instruments that have a relationship with VABs, namely the Common Agricultural Policy, the Structural Vision for Infrastructure and Spatial Planning, the POP3 subsidies, the Guarantee Scheme for Capital-Enhancing Credits, the Rural Housing Act, the Ladder for Sustainable Urbanisation, space-for-space regulation, nature and environmental legislation, the Nitrogen Approach Programme and, soon, the Subsidy Scheme for Pig Farms. In preventing VABs, municipalities are particularly confronted with strict environmental regulations and the fiscal settlement of farmers. When solving the VAB problem, it appears that Space-to-space policy does not work in the areas where the problem is greatest. This is because VABs regularly occur in shrinking areas because there is little enthusiasm for re-use, and additional homes are undesirable. Demolition schemes or demolition funds are also risky, in particular the danger that municipalities act as banks in this regard.

The needs of municipalities and provinces are aimed at postponing tax settlement without collection interest, aligning the Economic Value and the Economic Value at an Agricultural

Destination (the WEV value and the WEVAB value) or increasing the tax-deductible part of the demolition costs. There is also a strong need for space in environmental legislation that creates frameworks to shape the agricultural transition and for customisation instead of generic policy. The municipalities and provinces have also stated that there are opportunities in terms of speeding up the re-use processes, supporting farmers with plans for a change of function and outlining frameworks within which re-use is possible. Municipalities and provinces need a large-scale approach instead of Regionnal approaches and future-oriented reallocation.

In short, the current spatial set of instruments at the national level is inadequate and ineffective for municipalities and provinces in which the VAB problems play a role in resolving or preventing these issues. To be able to solve the problem in these Regionns, it is necessary to change the law or to develop new regulations.

List of acronyms

GLB: gemeenschappelijk landbouwbeleid - common agricultural policy

GVK: Garantieregeling vermogensversterkende kredieten - Guarantee scheme for capital-enhancing loans

IPO: interprovinciaal overleg - interprovincial consultation

LNV: Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit – Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

NOVI: nationale omgevingsvisie - national environmental vision

PAS: Programma aanpak stikstof - Program approach to nitrogen

POP3: platteland ontwikkelingsprogramma - Rural development program

VAB: vrijkomende agrarische bebouwing - vacant agricultural building

VNG: Vereniging Nederlandse Municipality ofn - Association of Dutch Municipalities

WEV: Waarde in het Economisch Verkeer - Economic Value

WEVAB: Waarde in het Economisch Verkeer bij Agrarische Bestemming - Economic Valuee at an Agricultural Destination

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem description

In recent years, the number of agricultural businesses has fallen, and the number of vacant agricultural buildings (VABs) has grown considerably. A large number of VABs affects a rural area's quality. This is the reason empty agricultural buildings are not desirable, and certainly having fewer is preferred.

	1950*	2016**	verandering t.o.v. 1950
Agrarische bedrijven (x duizend bedrijven)	410	55	-84%
Totale cultuurgrond (mln ha)	2.3	1.8	-21%
Melk- en kalfkoeien (x miljoen dieren)	1.5	1.6	+7%
Melk (mln kg)	5737	11941	+108%
Vleeskalveren (mln dieren)	0.08	0.9	+1065%
Leghennen (mln dieren)	37	47.7	+26%
Eieren (mln kg)	114	670	+488%
Slachtkuikens (mln dieren)	4.5	49.1	+985%
Varkens (mln dieren)	1.8	12.6	+578%

(*) voor vleeskalveren, leghennen en slachtkuikens komen de cijfers uit 1960 i.p.v. 1950.

(**) voor melk- en eierenproductie zijn de cijfers uit 2010 i.p.v. 2016.

Figure 1: Development of number of farms, area of agricultural land and livestock and milk and egg production between 1950 and 2015 (Bron: WUR, 2016)

As a result of economic, technological and political developments, the number of VABs has increased in recent years. Van der Vaart addressed this in 2005, even before the economic crisis.

Traditional farms are multifunctional and consist of a living space and a working space with space for animals or, for example, cultivated products (Van der Vaart, 2005). The work and residential buildings are separated in modern farms. There is a separate low stable for cattle, a separate barn with agricultural machines and other equipment, and a residential building (Van der Vaart, 2005). According to Van der Vaart (2005), the reuse of agricultural buildings can be divided into two categories: living and doing business. Of the detached agricultural buildings, 85% are converted into homes, and the remaining 15% are converted into a combination of residential and non-agricultural activities. Van Dam and Daalhuizen (2010) have stated that approximately 50% of the vacant company buildings are taken over by surrounding farms with a view towards scaling up. According to Van der Vaart (2005), VABs are difficult to find. With regard to the policy regarding the reuse of empty agricultural buildings, a development between 1960 and 2005 ensured more possibilities for reuse (Van der Vaart, 2005). From a municipal, provincial and national perspective, the reuse policy has become less strict. Nevertheless, the number of detached agricultural buildings is high, according to research by Gies, Nieuwenhuizen, Naeff, Vleemigh and Paulissen (2016). This study shows that the number of farms fell by 84% between 1950 and 2016 (Gies et al., 2016). According to Gies et al. (2016), 21 million square metres of agricultural buildings were released between 2000 and 2012, and another 30 million square metres are expected to be released by 2030.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this study is to provide the national government with insight into how it can contribute to solving the VAB problems.

1.3 Research question

To what extent are the preventive and curative instruments of the central government effective for provinces and municipalities with regard to solving the problems related to vacant agricultural buildings?

1.4 Subquestions

What is the current situation concerning the size and expectation with regard to vacant agricultural buildings?

To be able to answer the main question, it is important to first map the current situation and expectations for the near future. In this context, it is particularly important to distinguish between Regions where the number of VABs is large or small. The Regions in which the VAB problem is most important ultimately have the greatest interest in any policy change or additions and these form the basis for data collection.

What has been written in the literature about vacant agricultural buildings?

By researching what has already been written about VABs, insight is created into what is already known about the subject and where further research is needed. In the case of this study, it is desirable to know more about the causes and effects of VABs, which can help in analysing policies regarding the prevention or resolution of VABs. In addition, insight is needed into the system of management (also known as 'governance') in order to place the position of the central government in a broader perspective.

What policy is now active with regard to the release of agricultural buildings?

To determine whether the current national policy for municipalities and provinces is effective in solving the VAB problems, it is important to know what policy the government currently pursues and what regulations apply to VABs. Not only policy and regulations from the government are important, so, too, are those of provinces and municipalities. These are important to determine whether municipalities and provinces are impeded by the national government in pursuing policies or regulations with regard to VABs.

What are the needs or wishes of the municipalities and provinces with regard to central government policy?

By learning what municipalities and provinces need in terms of policy, in combination with the existing spatial instruments of the central government, it can be analysed to what extent national policy is adequate or fails to solve the VAB problems.

Can the current preventive and curative policy instruments of the central government meet the needs of provinces and municipalities, or is a new law/law amendment necessary?

By determining to what extent the current national policy meets municipalities' and provinces' needs, it can be determined whether these entities are satisfied and have sufficient instruments to achieve their goals of preventing or solving the VAB problems.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Vacant agricultural buildings

2.1.1 Definition of vacant agricultural building

According to Bouhuijs-Bos, Doove, Hendriks, Keller, Padding, Ströfer, Trouborst and Zuidema (2018), the term 'vacancy' is only used for agricultural real estate when there is talk of deterioration and the deterioration of an empty building. If a house or other building on a farmyard is vacant but does not deteriorate, this is called 'normal' vacancy (Bouhuijs-Bos, et al., 2018). The 'normal' vacancy rate is generally experienced as a less of a problem, according to Central Bureau of Statistics, Planning Agency for the Living Environment and Wageningen University. (2015). NVM (2017) has described VABs as those that are released because the agricultural activities on the plot have stopped. In the Alterra (2015) study into the release of agricultural buildings, the definition of inheritance transformation is used, and it refers to a change in the function of a property as a result of loss of agricultural function and that involves changes in buildings and/or other uses of buildings and/or layouts of the yard (Alterra, 2015).

2.1.2 Current situation

Approximately 22,000 agricultural companies stopped between 2000 and 2012, releasing some 21 million square metres of agricultural buildings (Gies, Nieuwenhuizen, Naeff, Vleemingh, Paulissen, 2016). On average, this amounts to 820 square metres of agricultural buildings per location. In particular, these include buildings that were built between 1965 and 1993 in the time of scaling up and asbestos (Gies, Nieuwenhuizen, Naeff, Vleemingh, Paulissen, 2016). A non-agricultural company has now been established in about a quarter of these vacant buildings, and buildings with a residential function are still inhabited, which means that 11 million square metres of farm buildings remain empty (Gies, Nieuwenhuizen, Naeff, Vleemingh, Paulissen, 2016) .

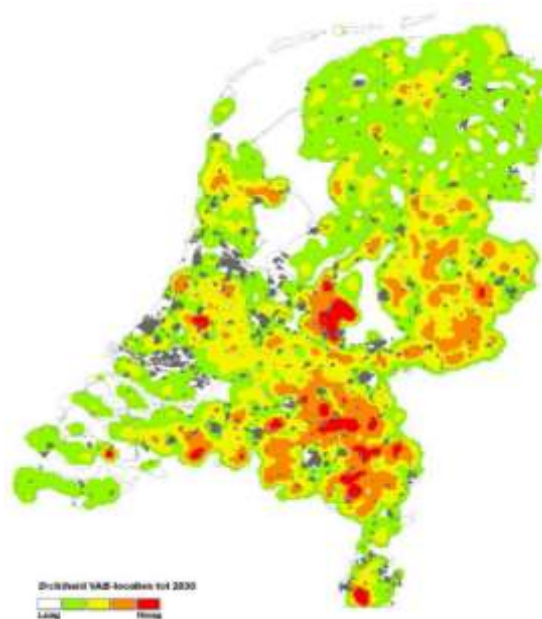


Figure 2: Expectation of VABs until 2030 in the Netherlands (Bron: Gies, 2019)

The VAB problems now and in the future mainly occur in Gelderland and Noord-Brabant, as shown in Figure 2 (Gies, Nieuwenhuizen, Naeff, Vleemingh, Paulissen, 2016; Gies, 2019). The expectation is that 5 million square metres in Noord-Brabant and 4.7 million square metres of industrial buildings will be released by 2030 (Alterra, 2014). In the Randstad provinces, the problem seems to be less serious due to the available space for re-use and transformation, as well as the high demand for housing and storage options in the outlying area (Arkema, 2015).

In terms of buildings, the expectation is that the relatively modern buildings, built between 1970 and 2000, will be released in the coming years (Alterra, 2014). The cultural-historical value and architectural qualities of these buildings are low, which means that the possibilities for re-use or transformation are limited. This is also related to the fact that many of these buildings contain asbestos, which makes their demolition/transformation expensive and unattractive (Alterra, 2014). In addition, the type of building plays a role in whether it will be released in the coming years. According to Alterra (2014), for example, it is expected that brick-built stables, in other words, pig houses, will be released. This type of development is difficult to demolish, and the pig air is difficult to remove, making re-use difficult.

2.1.3 Causes of VABs

After the war, the priority given to the agricultural sector declined sharply, partly due to the sector's image (Jansen-Janssen, 2008). For example, the agricultural sector has had to address various animal diseases, and there is increasing attention to environmental degradation and unattractive buildings in the countryside (Jansen-Janssen, 2008). Agricultural subsidies decreased, and the liberalisation of international markets and increasingly strict requirements from the government increased pressure on the agricultural sector (Jansen-Janssen, 2008). The reasons for the release of agricultural buildings, according to Geerling-Eiff and Van der Meulen (2008), are the farmers' personal situations, the environment in which a company is located, the business characteristics and other situation-specific aspects, as can be seen in figure 3. Another reason to end a company is because of the high investment costs that must



Figure 3: Reasons for the emergence of released agricultural buildings (Bron: Geerling-Eiff & Van der Meulen, 2008)

be incurred in order to comply with new regulations (Arkema, 2015). Pig farmers in particular face this issue. According to Arkema (2015), there is another important cause of VABs:

agricultural companies have become larger and more diverse, thus reducing the total number. Other companies buy the land, milk quotas and (environmental) rights from farmers who have stopped business (Arkema, 2015). This means that the buildings of those farmers remain functionless and become vacant. The problem is that the house remains inhabited, but the barns and stables become empty (Geerling-Eiff & Van der Meulen, 2008; Arkema, 2015). In addition, when a new shed is built, it often has certain new techniques, and products can thus be processed on the same property, so the food chain becomes shorter. However, if an existing shed does not meet these techniques, it is possible that the farmer may choose to leave it empty and build new sheds to meet the requirements or innovation needs (Arkema, 2015). One reason farmers do not always demolish their vacant barn or stable concerns the cultural-historical value that the building has (Arkema, 2015). Another problem that arises within this context is hidden vacancy. This occurs when farmers remain active on paper because it generates a large tax liability when they stop (Arkema, 2015).

2.1.4 Effects of VABs

According to Agricola, Hoefs, Van Doorn, Smidt and Os (2010), the release of agricultural buildings has an effect on the landscape and can lead to fossilisation and cluttering of the landscape, reducing the individuality and recognisability of areas. NVM (2017a) has stated that long-term vacant buildings also become a breeding ground for uncontrolled activities (such as drug production) and the fossilisation of the outlying area. VABs can also lead to problems for entrepreneurs who have invested their pension in the buildings but who can no longer make that investment (NVM, 2017a). However, according to Nemeth and Langhorst (2014), a plot that is no longer used has ecological advantages. For example, the cracks in the pavement allow the infiltration of rainwater, rising vegetation can help improve air quality and prevent heat stress, and certain plants can correct soil contamination (Nemeth & Langhorst, 2014). According to Agricola et al. (2010), there is a need for guidance from governments and companies on agricultural developments that may affect the landscape and possibly even strengthen its quality.

2.1.5 Multifunctional agricultural businesses

It is generally known that farmers' income strongly fluctuates. This is partly due to market forces and the climate (NOS, 2018). If the market is bad for the farmer for a number of consecutive years, or if the weather conditions are adverse, this could mean that the company is no longer profitable and goes bankrupt. This results in unused agricultural buildings and is one of the causes of the increased amount of VABs. One way to increase the financial security of a company is to develop side branches. This ensures that, if the agricultural branch does not yield enough, the sideline may be able to compensate for the shortfall. Already, 25% of farmers already do something with multifunctional agriculture, and 10% have plans to do so within the next five years (LTO, 2018). It is particularly attractive for agricultural entrepreneurs who have a shed empty. However, developing a sideline is not always easy. In many cases, obtaining a permit from the municipality is a long, costly and complicated process (De Klerk, 2015). This is because of the generally tight zoning plan to which municipalities must adhere. In addition, additional functions or replacement functions for vacant buildings are not always easy to implement due to the road networks in rural areas. Often, the traffic volume associated with a new function is not calculated. The influence on nature, environment and landscape is also weighing heavily (Arkema, 2015). When vacant stables are reused, often, that they are given the function of living, care or bed & breakfasts (Alterra, 2014).

2.2. Governance

According to Holmberg and Rothstein (2012), the importance of good management is clear. Holmberg and Rothstein (2012) have stated that good management ensures that people feel positive, and it concerns the quality of the government. Governance is possible from different actors in society. To make a well-organised whole, the various actors and steering instruments are often merged (Steurer, 2013). This leads to seven basic types of regulation, four of which represent government policy (with varying degrees of government involvement), while three

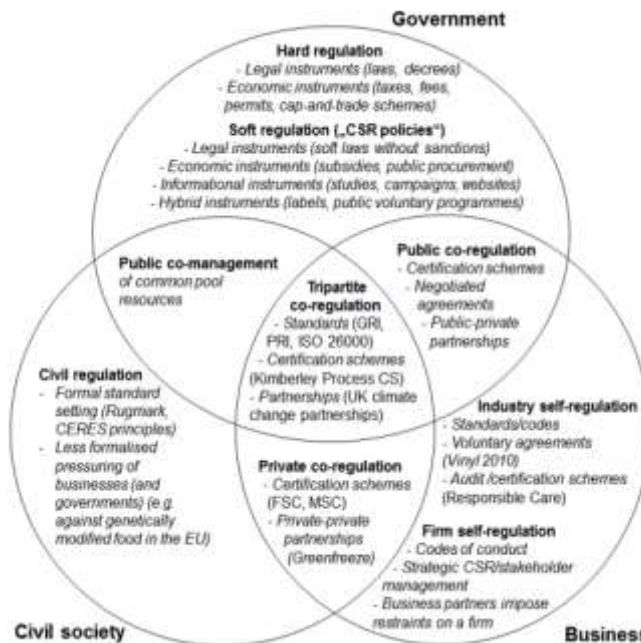


Figure 4: Four domain-spanning types of co-regulation (Bron: Steurer, 2013)

exclusively depend on civil society (Steurer, 2013). Basically, the model in figure 4 shows that there is a difference between governance interventions in which actors act alone or together. When introducing governmental policy, in combination with other actors, Steurer (2013) has discussed public co-regulation/management and tripartite co-regulation. For market parties, for example, it is important to work in accordance with the rules of the government and that the company buys the products. The government also has an interest in ensuring that the market parties continue to operate to maintain the economy and that society continues to consume. For its part, the society benefits from, for example, the market parties continuing to produce. This is comparable to the theme of rural development. It is a social problem because it affects the spatial quality, so society has an interest in addressing it. The government (both national as well as provinces and municipalities) sets policy with regard to solving the problem, but it is important that market parties seize the opportunities the government offers. New or potentially new policy needs to take into account these different actors and possible governance cooperation.

At present, the government does not yet see an active role for itself; for the time being, responsibility lies with the province, municipality and owner (Arkema, 2015). For example, entrepreneurs believe that a scrapping scheme should be introduced, while the government believes that entrepreneurs are responsible for their own property (Alterra, 2014).

2.3 Policy

Government policy concerns its approach to social issues (Hupe, 2007). It not only focuses on solving social problems through curative policy, but also has policies to equitably organise society, promote prosperity and make society more pleasant through preventive policy (Van den Heuvel, 1998). According to Hemerijck (2003), four policy questions can be asked, namely: does it work, does it fit, is it allowed and does it belong? Policy must be instrumentally efficient, which means that it must 'work' (Hemerijck, 2003). The chosen policy instrument thus must make a clear contribution to achieving political objectives. Policy is effective if the implementation of the chosen measures leads to the realisation of the intended goals. In addition, it must be politically feasible and administratively feasible, which is also called 'decisive' (Hemerijck, 2003). It is important that policy measures fit into the institutional structure of the political system. Third, it is important that policy decisions are 'allowed' according to the rules and procedures of the rule of law, in other words, they must be constitutively lawful (Hemerijck, 2003). Fourth, social acceptability is a requirement. The political interventions must 'hear' in the eyes of citizens, that is, be in accordance with generally accepted norms and values (Hemerijck, 2003). According to Putnam (1993, 63), a good democratic government not only takes into account the demands of its citizens, but also acts effectively on these demands. Putnam (1993, 63) has called the continued responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens the most important characteristic of a democracy. Good governance also not only consists of input, such as points of view or complaints, but it also produces things. The key policy questions can be subdivided into action orientation and identification criteria, as shown in the figure below.

Handelingsoriëntatie	Criteria van legitimatie	
	Output-legitimiteit	Input-legitimiteit
<i>Logic of appropriateness</i>	Politiek-bestuurlijke slagvaardigheid ('past het?')	Maatschappelijke aanvaardbaarheid ('hoort het?')
<i>Logic of consequence</i>	Instrumentele doelmatigheid ('werkt het?')	Constitutionele rechtmatigheid ('mag het?')

Figure 5: Key questions of policy (Hemerijck, 2003)

According to Scharpf (1999), political decisions are legitimate if they reflect the will of the people, which relates to participation and consensus. When *input legitimacy* is based on administration by the people, and when the distance increases between the selector and representatives and participation is made more difficult, this leads to a reduction of the input legitimacy. With *output* legitimacy, the idea of 'government for the people' is the starting point, and political decisions are legitimate if the common interests of voters are effectively represented. According to Scharpf (1999), certain problems must be solved collectively because they cannot be solved by individual action, by the market or by volunteers. *The logic of consequence* focuses on acting rationally and deliberately with a view to achieving certain objectives with the most appropriate means and methods (Scharpf, 1999). In *the logic of suitability*, actors are guided in their assessment by what is politically feasible and culturally acceptable in given situations (Scharpf, 1999). This research is part of the key question 'does it work?', which relates to instrumental efficiency. In this case, the question concerns the spatial instruments of the central government and to what extent these 'work' or not.

According to figure 5, this is based on 'government by the people' as well as rational, well-considered action.

2.3.1 Interactive policy

Interactive policy means that a government involves citizens, companies, civil society organisations and other governments at the earliest possible stage in planning, decision-making and implementation with the aim of gaining more support and removing any resistance (Klijn and Koppenjan, 1998 ; Pröpper and Steenbeek, 1998, 2001; Edelenbos and Monnikhof, 2001; Denters, 2003; Herweijer, 2003). This method of policy-making has common ground with this research, since the central government involves other governments (provinces and municipalities) in developing appropriate policies with the aim of solving or preventing the VAB problem together in a quick, effective manner. Interactive policy also plays a role in provinces and municipalities that involve citizens, companies and civil society organisations in solving VABs. The rise of interactive policy concerns the declining turnout rates in (local) elections since the early 1990s (De Graaf, 2007). As a result, municipalities have realised that they cannot simply postpone their legitimacy until the next elections, but that, in many cases they want to see their policies directly legitimised (De Graaf, 2007). This has led a municipality to look for social parties that share the policy problem or could contribute to solving it (De Graaf, 2007). In the case of interactive policy, governments seek rapprochement to develop policy together with parties from society (De Graaf, 2007). The term support is often used to articulate legitimacy and to indicate that there is support for an intention, decision or broader policy program. In the motivational chain, in Figure 5, of interactive policy, Edelenbos (2000: 89) has shown how different motives are connected.

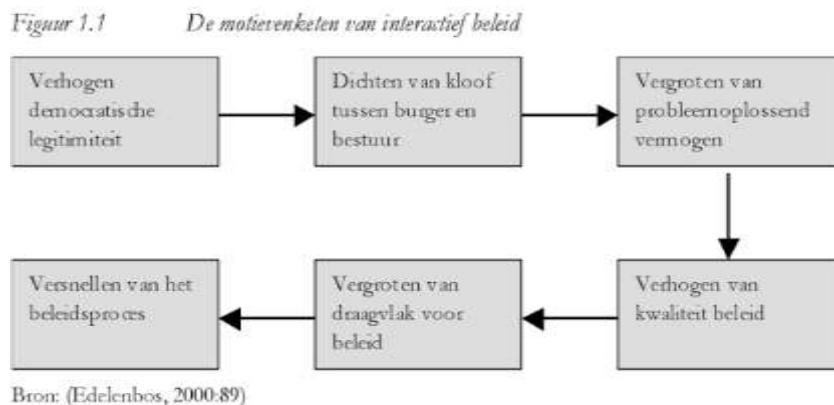


Figure 6: Motive chain of interactive policy (Bron: De Graaf, 2007)

According to De Graaf (2007), interactive policy leads to an increase in democratic legitimacy and a smaller gap between administration and administrators. Citizens' information, experience, knowledge and expertise are used and lead to greater problem-solving capacity (De Graaf, 2007). Edelenbos (2000: 89) has stated that various forms of knowledge and perspectives on the problems and solutions ensure that the quality of a policy increases. Because participating stakeholders and citizens see many of their wishes in the final policy, resistance decreases, and support for the policy increases (Edelenbos, 2000: 89). Because less resistance is offered, delays can be prevented, and policy processes can be accelerated.

2.3.2 Policy cycle

The policy cycle of Cairney (2013), which is shown in figure 7, describes how policy is created. It consists of six phases, starting with agenda-setting. In this phase, problems are identified and prioritised as requiring government attention. In the case of this research, it is therefore the VAB problem. The second phase is formulating policy, in which the effects of solutions are estimated, possible solutions are inventoried and policy instruments are selected. In this study, this is the inventory of current and desired policy with regard to VABs and the policy

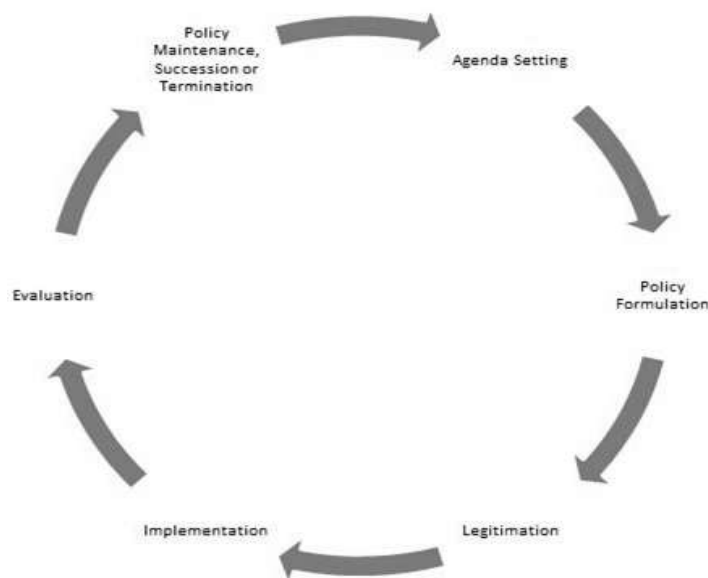


Figure 7: The policy cycle (Bron: Cairney, 2013)

instruments that the various government layers have at their disposal. In the 'legitimation' phase, support is provided for the chosen policy instruments. In this study, therefore, if it concerns a new law or an amendment to a current law, a commitment by the minister is needed. The implementation phase implies that an organisation (which has personnel, money and legal authority) becomes responsible for the implementation of the policy; in the case of a possible new law or amendment of a law, the government itself ensures the implementation. In the evaluation phase, the policy's degree of success is assessed and the effect is considered, which in the case of a new/amended law is the same for the central government. At the end of the policy maintenance phase, it is decided whether the policy should continue or be modified or terminated. This research takes place between the agenda setting phase in which problems are identified and the policy formulation phase in which policy is developed. This research is a further identification of the VAB problem and an exploration of any new policy to be developed or adjusted.

2.3.3 Policy related to VABs

Initiators of the reuse of agricultural buildings or barns often face regulations and zoning plans. In particular, the processes of reallocating are difficult, which is daunting. In addition, the entrepreneurs present in an area are sceptical of new destinations in the neighbourhood because this can have an impact on their business with regard to environmental legislation (Arkema, 2015).

In order to be able to exert influence on VABs in a spite of the zoning plan, a new policy has been developed in a number of municipalities, or the current policy has been adjusted (NVM, 2017a).

1. Locaties aanduiden als VAB (Gemeente Woerden)
2. Functieverandering bij aanduiding VAB (Gemeente Woerden)
3. Wijzigingsbevoegdheid / Functieverandering (Gemeente Barneveld)
4. Verspreide kosten (Gemeente Boxmeer)
5. Tijdelijke vergunning (Gemeente Boxmeer)
6. Omvang van bedrijfsgebouwen/bijgebouwen (Gemeente Boxmeer, gemeente Barneveld)
7. Ruimte voor Ruimte / Rood voor Rood (Gemeente Barneveld, gemeente Dalfsen)
8. Legaliseren of handhaven van strijdigheden (Gemeente Someren)
9. Slooptening (Gemeente Someren)
10. Stenen voor stenen (Gemeente Someren)
11. Sloopsubsidie (Gemeente Someren)
12. Sloopbank (Gemeente Someren, Provincie Noord-Brabant)

Figure 8: Municipal instruments (Bron: NVM, 2017a)

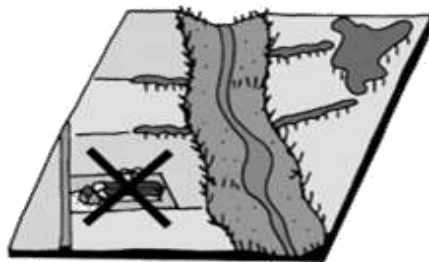
For example, the 'space-for space arrangement' is in force in a number of municipalities. This means that, in exchange for the demolition of an agricultural business building or greenhouse, a civic residence may be built at the same or another location within the municipality (NVM, 2017b). This regulation has agreements with the so-called 'staldering'. For every extension of the square meter, another square meter must therefore be demolished from another farm that has stopped producing (NVM, 2017a). Another example of a scheme is the demolition subsidy, in which the municipality pays for the demolition costs. In addition, less obvious interventions are possible, such as the installation of fibre optics. This ensures that the outdoor area becomes attractive for establishing businesses. According to Janssen-Jansen (2008), Dutch spatial planners were inspired by the Americans with regard to the implementation of an innovative system of transferable development rights that enabled governments to finance the demolition of stables with the construction of expensive houses on large plots. This is now also called the 'space-for-space regulation'.

With regard to working towards a solution, Arkema (2015) believes it is interesting to make the link with other forms of vacancy, such as offices, shops, schools, business parks, churches and care institutions.

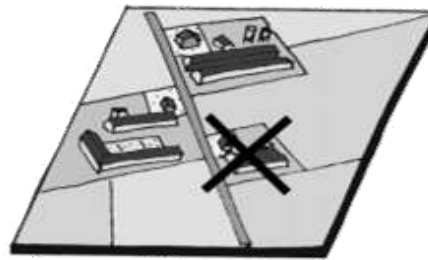
2.3.4 Space-for-space arrangement

Dutch spatial planning uses the terms 'red areas' and 'green areas'. Red areas are understood to mean residential areas, industrial areas and commercial areas (Janssen-Jansen, 2008), while green areas are defined as nature areas and water. In order to prevent a conflict between the objectives of areas, combined 'red-green' planning has been created, whereby there is a connection between the development of red and green areas (Janssen-Jansen, 2008). This form of planning stems from the introduction of adaptive planning in 2004, which was

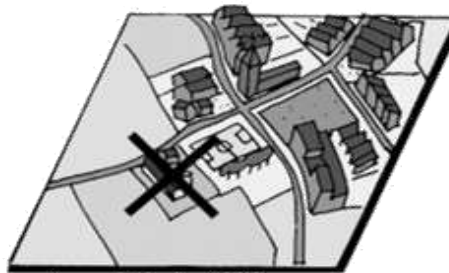
introduced in the National Spatial Strategy (Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, 2004). Spatial planning focuses more on development planning than on public regulation. Development planning was understood as an attempt to incorporate the market mechanism by cooperating with market parties in public-private partnerships while, at the same time, maintaining public control. This change did not lead to a radical reform of the planning policy but progressed gradually through compensatory mechanisms. One such mechanism is the 'green-for-red' concept, where the focus is on compensating for green areas that are lost as a result of development activities (Janssen-Jansen, 2008). This concept states that a similar amount of green area must be retained or developed elsewhere. The 'red-for-green' concept relates to the transfer of development rights between built and open spaces as a result of the conversion of land use in exchange for the realisation of government goals (Janssen-Jansen, 2008). It is also possible to establish financing systems for a more Regionnal approach to convert unwanted, urban 'red' land use in vulnerable areas into more 'green' land use. The Space-to- space policy is aimed at improving the overall quality of urban and rural areas and means that creating expensive houses on large plots in designated areas finances the demolition of agricultural buildings (Janssen, Jansen, 2008). This scheme stems from the 'stoppers scheme' of the central government with the aim of reducing the number of livestock farms. As a result of this arrangement, some of the farmers stopped, which led to empty stables in the countryside. Regionnal governments were afraid of undesirable activities in agricultural buildings and wanted to convert the agricultural land into rural land, which resulted in the Spatial Planning policy. The central government agreed to this, allowing provincial authorities to authorise expensive houses to be built on large plots to finance the demolition of stables. The surface of the expensive houses covers approximately 10% of the surface of the demolished stables (Mulders, 2003). According to Janssen-Jansen (2008), the 'space-for-space scheme' is the most developed in North Brabant because the VAB problem there is the greatest. Around 3,000 building plots were planned there in 2008 to cover the costs of demolishing 3 million square metres of stables (Jansen-Jansen, 2008). The areas where stables are demolished are also referred to as 'transmission areas', and the areas where the villas are built are referred to as 'reception areas'. According to Janssen-Jansen (2008), however, a pitfall has arisen between the sending and receiving areas. With the introduction of the stopping scheme for livestock farmers, no priority was given to companies in vulnerable ecological areas. As a result, the quality improvement in the transmission areas was not always optimal. Municipalities also have difficulty in identifying with the project, especially when no stables are demolished on their territory. This leads to less participation from municipalities, although this is important for the approval of suitable zoning in the receiving areas.



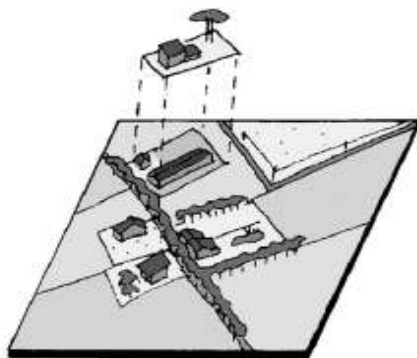
demolition location in vulnerable area



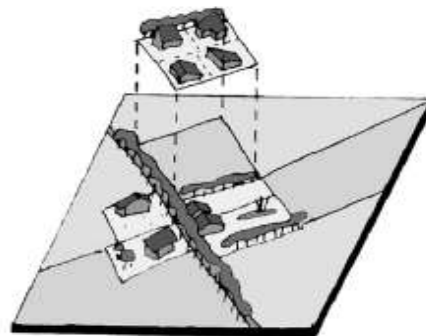
demolition location in an agricultural development area



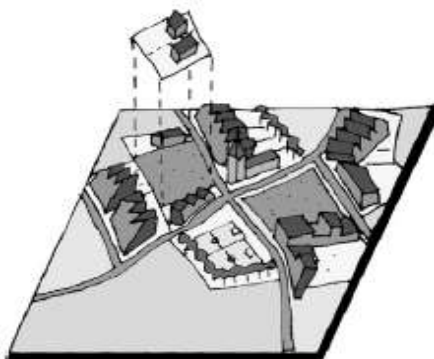
demolition location on the border of a village; can be used as building area



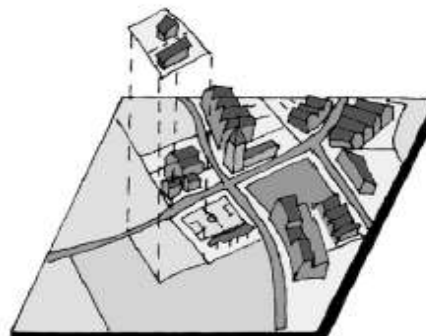
building area on demolition location on the border of a village



building area within an urban cluster at the countryside



building area within existing urbanized area



building area at the border of a village

Figure 9: Space- for space policy imagined (Bron: Mulders, 2003)

According to Janssen-Jansen (2008), a more local red-for-green approach could have led to more visible results and thus a greater municipal involvement. In addition, a larger amount of available data at the local level about options for changing and reusing stables could have led to more tailor-made solutions. Figure 9 illustrates possible activities related to the Space-to-space policy in the sending and receiving areas.

2.4 Conceptual framework

The literature shows that there is a need for guidance from the government on developments in rural areas that may have an impact on spatial quality and possibly even improve it (Agricola, Hoefs, Van Doorn, Smidt & Os, 2010). In addition, the literature shows that the policy has been less strict in recent years and that there are more possibilities for the reuse of VABs (Van der Vaart, 2005). However, according to Gies, Nieuwenhuizen, Naeff, Vleemingh and Paulissen (2016), the number of detached agricultural buildings has again increased in recent years. In short, the preventive and curative policy may have to become even smoother, or new policy must be introduced that enables municipalities (and provinces) to solve the 'problem' in their area and that provides more possibilities for the society and market. The conceptual model shows that government control is enacted in two ways, namely on the basis of preventive policy and curative policy. Preventive policy is aimed at addressing the causes of the occurrence of VABs, whereas curative policy is aimed at resolving the effects of VABs. The preventive policy is effective if its implementation contributes to the prevention of VABs (Hemerijck, 2003), while the curative policy is effective if its implementation contributes to solving the VAB problems (Hemerijck, 2003).

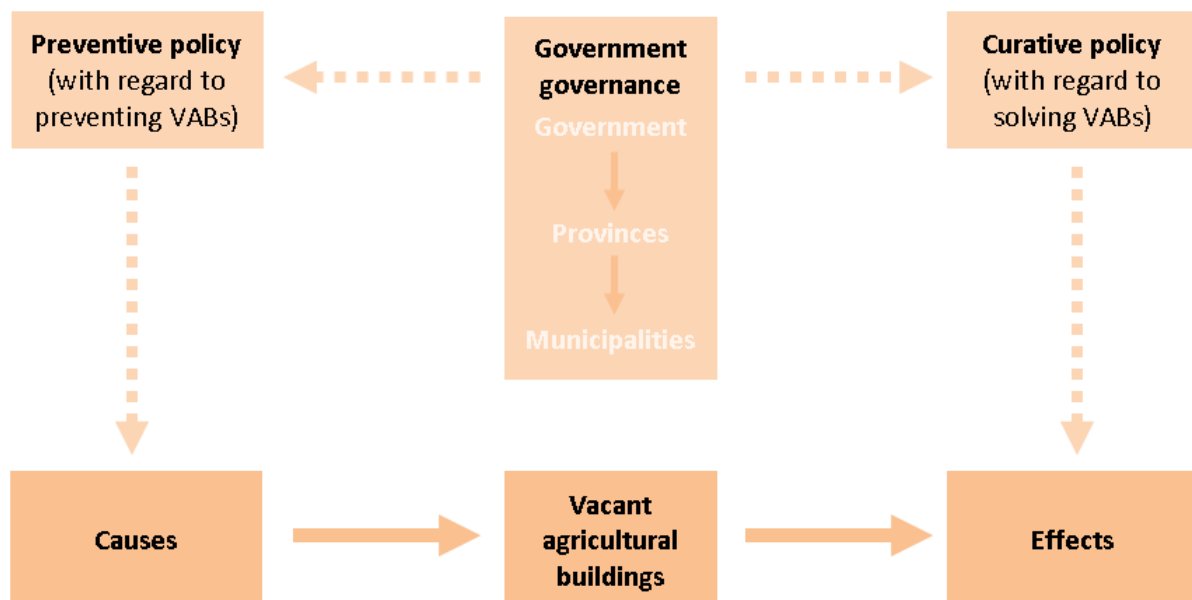


Figure 10: Conceptual framework

2.5 Operationalisation

Variable	Sub-question	Theory	Indicator ¹
Governmental governance	‘Which policy is currently in force with regard to VABs?’ and ‘Can the current preventive and curative policy instruments of the national government meet the needs of provinces and municipalities, or is a new law/ amendment of a law necessary?’	Good governance Key questions of policy Interactive policy Policy cycle	Questions 8, 12, 14
Preventive policy	‘Which policy is currently in force with regard to VABs?’ and ‘Can the current preventive and curative policy instruments of the national government meet the needs of provinces and municipalities, or is a new law/ amendment of a law necessary?’	Key questions of policy Interactive policy Policy cycle	Questions 3, 4, 5, 12, 13
Curative policy	‘Which policy is currently in force with regard to VABs?’ and ‘Can the current preventive and curative policy instruments of the national government meet the needs of provinces and municipalities, or is a new law/ amendment of a law necessary?’	Key questions of policy Interactive policy Policy cycle Space-to-space policy	Questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13
Causes	‘What has been written about VABs in the literature?’	Causes of VABs	Questions 1, 9, 15
Vacant agricultural buildings (problem)	‘What has been written about VABs in the literature?’ and ‘What are the needs/wishes of the municipalities and provinces regarding policy of the national government?’ and ‘What is the current situation regarding the size and expectation of VABs?’	Definition of VABs Size and expectation of VABs Multifunctional agricultural businesses	Questions 2, 7, 10
Effects of VABs	‘What has been written about VABs in the literature?’	Effects of VABs	Questions 2, 10
Effectiveness of policy	‘Which policy is currently in force with regard to VABs?’ and ‘Can the current preventive and curative policy instruments of the national government meet the needs of provinces and municipalities, or is a new law/ amendment of a law necessary?’	Key questions of policy	3,4,5, 13

Tabel 1: Operationalisation

¹ Numbered interview questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1

3. Method

3.1 Strategy

In this research, an attempt is made to delve deeply into the problems and experiences of municipalities and provinces to trace any defects or obstacles in current national policy. In the end, an answer is provided to an open research question. These are typical characteristics of qualitative research (Baarda, 2009). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), in such studies, the researcher is placed in the world and studies aspects of his natural environment, and attempts are made to understand or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people give them. This research enters as far as possible into the 'world' of VABs in order to gain as much first-hand knowledge as possible. This corresponds to the epistemological philosophy, in which the researcher relies on stories from actors, collaborates, spends time in the field and becomes an 'insider' (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). The expectation is that this provides the most realistic picture of the current situation and needs.

The research strategy, which is shown in Figure 11, consists of four phases, namely a theoretical framework, current policy and experiences, analyses and a conclusion.

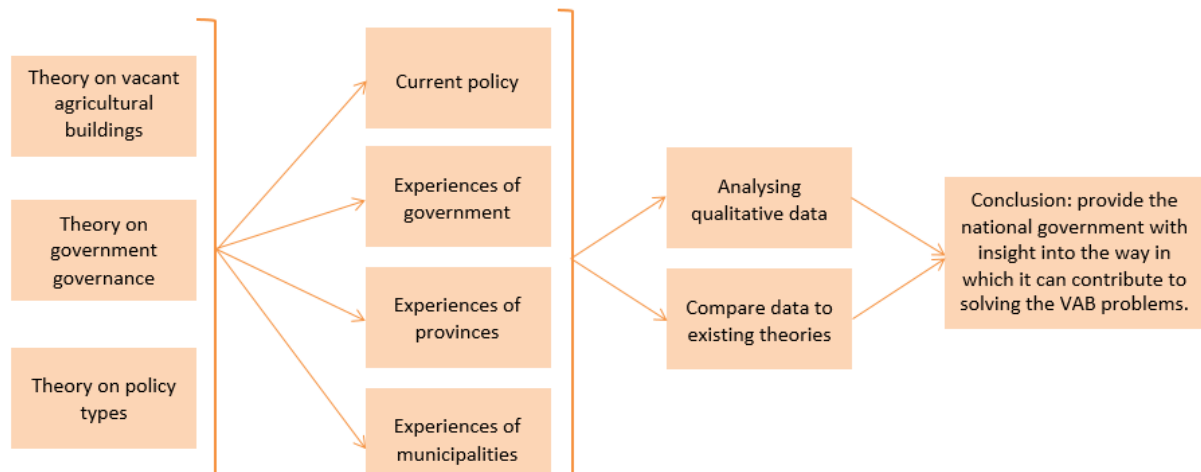


Figure 11: Research strategy

After the theoretical framework has been compiled, an inventory is made that includes the current policy in a deductive manner from both the central government and the selected municipalities and provinces, and these parties are interviewed to determine the effectiveness of the policy. An inductive analysis then considers whether the needs of the respondents can be found in the current policy of the national government, from which conclusions and recommendations follow.

It can be stated that, in this study, on the basis of data from the field, a theory is developed about what is or is not missing in today's policy with regard to solving the VAB problems. This corresponds to the grounded theory research approach described by Creswell and Poth (2018). According to Corbin and Strauss (2007), the purpose of grounded theory is to move beyond description and generate or discover a theory. They have also called it a 'unified theoretical explanation' for a process or action (Corbin & Strauss, 2007, p. 107). Grounded theory places high value on participants' experience with the subject. Grounded theory generates a general explanation, also called a theory, of a process, action or interaction that is formed by the views of a large number of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.2 Data collection

The respondents to this study are employees, both policy and political, of municipalities and provinces in which the density of VABs is highest according to the research of Wageningen Environmental Research (Gies, 2019), namely:

- Deurne
- Gemert-Bakel
- Ede
- Barneveld
- Meijerijstad
- Nederweert
- Someren
- Provincie Noord-Brabant
- Provincie Gelderland

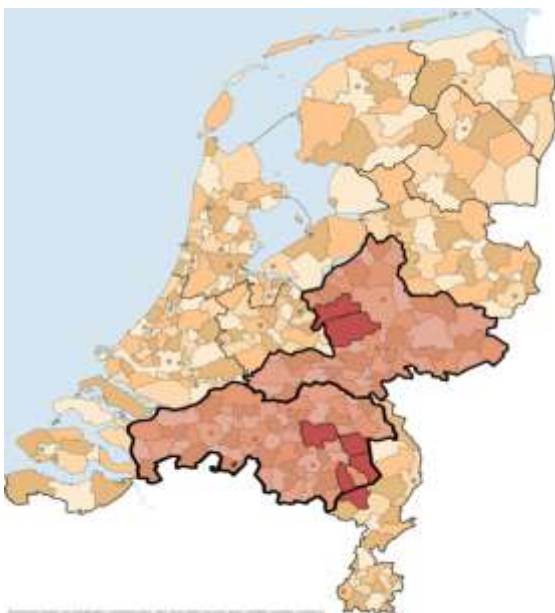


Figure 12: Map with participating municipalities and provinces

In this study, employees of the municipalities of Deurne, Gemert-Bakel, Ede and Barneveld, as well as the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Gelderland, are interviewed; subjects include policy officers, aldermen and deputies. Data from the municipalities of Meijerijstad, Nederweert, Someren, Ede and the province of Noord-Brabant are available in the form of a survey. In 2018, surveys were conducted among all municipalities and provinces in the Netherlands by VNG and IPO. This data has been made available by the Ministry of Home Affairs to be used for further investigation. In this study, this external data is used as additional information on top of the information that emerges from the interviews.

First, an inventory is made of VAB policies in the seven provinces/municipalities on the basis of desk research. In order to check the completeness of the data and to gain insight into the needs of municipalities and provinces in the field of national policy, interviews were held with specialists within the seven provinces and municipalities in which the VAB density is highest. To gain insight into the past of national VAB policy and to verify whether the policy inventory is complete, the director of the Animal Agro chains and Animal Welfare department and a

coordinating lawyer from the Ministry of Agriculture Nature and Food Quality were also interviewed. The search for people who can provide more, different or specific information about the discovered concepts or theories is also called 'theoretical sampling' (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). During the interviews, a basic questionnaire was used to guide the conversation, but in practice, some deviation occurred because the respondents provided answers. Thus, in practice, no fixed questionnaire was used during the interviews, which took place at the location where the respondent works, for example at the town hall, provincial hall or ministry. This is in line with the epistemological assumption of the researcher, in which he comes as close as possible to the respondents and becomes as familiar with them as possible (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). After all, the assumption is that the longer researchers stay in the field, or the better they know the participants, the more they 'know what they know' first-hand (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). During the interview, the respondent can provide the researcher with new ideas or insights, which means that questions other than those initially conceived can be asked (Baarda, 2009). In the process of interviewing and transcribing, process components such as memoing, categorising and coding are applied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collected by a national survey of IPO and VNG through a survey with mainly open questions were also used in the survey. This information serves as data from municipalities in which the VAB problem is large but that were not prepared to be interviewed for this study. The survey data of some municipalities that did participate in this study serve as additional information.



Figure 13: Data collection methods

3.2.1 Interviews

Name	Function	Organisation	Date and location
Eigen data			
Aart de Kruijf	Wethouder	Municipality of Barneveld	20-5 City Hall
Sander van Nieuwenhuizen	Strategisch adviseur omgevingsbeleid	Municipality of Barneveld	20-5 City Hall
Geert Butz	Adviseur/projectleider buitengebied	Municipality of Ede	20-5 City Hall
Marc van de Ven	Projectmanager ruimtelijke ontwikkeling	Provincie Noord-Brabant	21-5 Telefonisch
Erik van Merrienboer	Gedeputeerde	Provincie Noord-Brabant	21-5 Provinciehuis
Peter Drenth	Gedeputeerde	Provincie Gelderland	23-5 IPO Den Haag
Anke van Extel-Van Katwijk	Wethouder	Municipality of Gemert-Bakel	24-5 City Hall
Patrick de Wit	Programmaleider Ruimte	Municipality of Gemert-Bakel	24-5 City Hall
Henk Niezen	Senior medewerker ruimtelijke ontwikkeling	Municipality of Gemert-Bakel	24-5 City Hall
Wendela de Ridder	Beleidsontwikkelaar plattelandsontwikkeling	Municipality of Deurne	24-5 City Hall
Lieke Hendrix	Directeur dierlijke agroketens en dierenwelzijn	Ministerie landbouw, natuur en voedselkwaliteit (LNV)	27-5 Ministerie van LNV
Rudolph Haije	Coördinerend jurist, directie wetgeving en juridische zaken	Ministerie landbouw, natuur en voedselkwaliteit (LNV)	27-5 Ministerie van LNV
Externe data			
Respondent 1 (anoniem)	Juridisch medewerker	Provincie Noord-Brabant	2018 Schriftelijk
Respondent 2 (anoniem)	Programmamanager ruimtelijke ontwikkeling	Provincie Noord-Brabant	2018 Schriftelijk
Respondent 3 (anoniem)	Beleidsmedewerker	Meierijstad	2018 Schriftelijk
Respondent 4 (anoniem)	Programmamanager omgevingswet en buitengebied	Nederweert	2018 Schriftelijk
Respondent 5 (anoniem)	Beleidsmedewerker	Someren	2018 Schriftelijk
Respondent 6 (anoniem)	beleidsmedewerker	Ede	2018 Schriftelijk

Tabel 2: Overview respondents

3.3 Validity and reliability

3.3.1 Reliability

Reliability concerns the presence of random errors (Korzilius, 2000). An investigation is reliable if the approach used and the results obtained are independent of the time at which the investigation was conducted, the measuring instrument used and the investigator conducting the investigation (Korzilius, 2000). For the reliability of the research, it is important to have sufficient research units, and the following condition applies: the more research units of the population that participate in the research, the greater the reliability is (Korzilius, 2000). Various provinces and municipalities were interviewed in this study, which were elaborated on the basis of transcription and labeling. In this case, the decision was made not to interview all municipalities and provinces. This would not have been possible in terms of time, and therefore a selection was made of provinces and municipalities that are most affected by VABs. A total of four municipalities and two provinces were interviewed. The Netherlands has 355 municipalities and 12 provinces in total. Relatively speaking, 12 interviews (spread over 4 municipalities and 2 provinces) are few and therefore low in reliability. However, in this study, only statements are made about the municipalities and provinces in which the VABs are experienced as a problem, and not about the Netherlands as a whole.

The chance of accidental errors in this study is small. It did not use random respondents but selected respondents. The interviews were not held on weekends, but only on weekdays, so this could not affect the respondents' answers. It is also the case that the respondents were not interested in giving other answers when he or she were influenced by personal circumstances, such as promotion or a good mood, since that is unrelated to the VABs.

3.3.2 Validity

Validity means that descriptions and explanations given in the research reflect reality (Korzilius, 2000). Validity considerations examine the extent to which systematic errors occur in a study, such as the tendency to give socially desirable or politically correct answers, and inadequately formulated questions. Forms of validity are content validity, concept validity, internal validity and external validity (Korzilius, 2000).

Content validity determines whether all aspects of a concept are well measured, particularly in the area of translating the concept to be measured into questions. In the theoretical framework, variables are defined and operationalised, so the probability that a variable is wrongly measured decreases. With concept validity, an attempt is made to determine whether the measurement was actually measured. For example, it is not the intention to measure social desirability or consent, but the intended concept. This is a matter of understanding that originates from a larger theoretical framework and that is related to other characteristics, which are also found in the present research. In this study, the concept of validity is relatively high because, in principle, the respondent has no interest in providing other answers. The only potential problem is that the respondent could articulate some answers in a way that is different from what he or she actually means. This may be because the respondent knows that his or her answers could indirectly contribute to adapting current policies or creating new ones. Here, however, it is difficult to determine, but it can be taken into account in the analysis of the interviews. Internal validity relates to the quality of the conclusions of the entire research, in which it is examined whether other factors cause the conclusions from the research (Korzilius, 2000). This shows an overlap with the

aforementioned fact that respondents may have an interest in new or adjusted policy for reasons other than the VABs. The scope or generalisability of the conclusions to populations is measured on the basis of external validity (Korzilius, 2000). In the questionnaire for the interview, the questions were written as accurately as possible so the answers would be useful for the research. The external validity in this study was strengthened because, among other measures, interviews were conducted in various Regions throughout the Netherlands.

3.4 Relevance

3.4.1 Social

VABs can influence the spatial quality of an area, as Agricola et al. (2012), NVM (2017a) and Nemeth and Langhorst (2014) have stated. Because the large size of VABs leads to problems, such as the drainage of areas, criminal activities and the deterioration of the landscape, a high quantity of VABs is increasingly seen as a problem. The various government layers have stated that the owners of the vacant buildings are responsible for maintaining or demolishing the stables, but because they are unable to do so and the negative effects have an impact on the living environment, it becomes a social problem. To guarantee the living and living climate in an area, it is important to regulate VABs. Provinces and municipalities are primarily responsible for this, but they must have the opportunity to do so. If they are restricted by the national government in the implementation of their policy, it may be necessary to adjust the national policy or to create a new policy (Agricola et al., 2012). This study was written from the perspective of municipalities and provinces because they are closest to people and play a key role in solving the 'problem'.

3.4.2 Scientific

In the existing literature, a great deal has been written about the causes, effects, magnitude and expected developments in the field of VABs. What is missing, however, is a study on the approach to VABs and which governmental instruments are effective in this area. For example, the space-for-space arrangement is designed differently in each municipality, and some municipalities appear to be satisfied, while others are not (Jansen-Jansen, 2008). This study investigates, among other aspects, how the space-for-arrangement in relation to VABs may or may not be effective. The effectiveness of policies depends on the extent to which they help to achieve political goals (Hemerijck, 2003). This research develops a theory on the effectiveness of government policy in solving problems. In addition, the literature has not yet established a link between local (municipal/provincial) policy and national policy, and this research focuses not only on policy collection, but also on the effectiveness of this policy, and it shows how the relationship between policies of different levels of government. This study contributes to the knowledge of shortcomings and opportunities in current government policy in terms of its effectiveness.

It can also contribute to existing scientific knowledge in the field of the origin of VABs, the effects of VABs and the multifunctional agricultural activities in relation to VABs. In addition, the experiences of municipalities and provinces from this research can contribute to the theory of 'four domain stress types of co-regulation' (Steurere, 2013).

4. Spatial developments

This chapter discusses the spatial developments currently taking place in the area of spatial planning by drawing on the interviews, external data and desk study. In chapter 4.1, general contemporary developments are discussed, such as the arrival of environmental law, climate change and aging. Chapter 4.2 discusses developments taking place in the agricultural sector, such as organic farming, Subsidy Scheme for Pig Farms and scaling up. Chapter 4.3 relates to the history, causes, consequences and expectations with regard to VABs. Finally, the objectives related to the rural area, and in particular VABs, are discussed in chapter 4.4.

4.1 Developments in spatial planning in general

According to Van de Ven (Appendix 4), the following themes currently play a dominant role in spatial planning: climate, energy, quality of life, care and housing. Climate change, also known as global warming, leads to dehydration and weather extremes, according to De Ridder (appendix 6). This has also been confirmed by Milieudefensie (nd), which states that climate change can lead to heat waves and droughts, a rise in sea level, extreme rain showers, more climate refugees and a loss of biodiversity. According to various respondents, including Haije, De Ridder, Drenth and Van de Ven (appendices 9, 6, 5 and 4), the climate priority is quite high. Goals and measures have been taken worldwide to combat climate change as much as possible and to keep the negative consequences manageable. The Dutch government's goal is to have 49% fewer greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 than in 1990 (Central Government, nd f). The Climate Act sets the percentage by which the Netherlands must reduce CO₂ emissions. Agreements with sectors, including the agricultural sector, about how climate goals can be achieved are described in the climate agreement (Central Government, nd f). Because the greenhouse effect is a global problem, there is international cooperation through climate agreements, such as the United Nations Climate Convention and the Kyoto Protocol (Central Government, nd f). One of the terms that is widely used in the context of climate change is 'sustainability'. In this context, sustainability means that the influence of human activities does not cause permanent damage to the environment, so that future generations can also use it. In addition to sustainability, 'energy transition' is also a term that is frequently used in the context of climate change. Energy transition means the transition from traditional fossil fuels such as coal, gas and nuclear energy to sustainable energy from, for example, wind, water, sun and biomass (Essent, nd).

One of the developments that municipalities in particular have spent years preparing for is the arrival of the new Environment Act, according to Hendrix, Haije, Niezen, Van Extel, Van Merrienboer, Van de Ven, De Ridder and Butz (annexes 8, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7). As early as 2015, the House of Representatives approved the environmental law, and the Senate followed in 2016 (Central Government, ndg). The Environment Act will enter into force in 2021 (Central Government, ndg), and 26 existing laws, including spatial planning, are bundled into it. The environmental law is aimed at stimulating sustainable projects; coordinating various plans for spatial planning, the environment and nature; and giving municipalities, provinces and water boards more freedom to act (Central Government, ndg). The environmental law also includes one national vision on the living environment, namely the National Environmental Vision (NOVI), which forms the integral long-term vision for a sustainable physical living environment. According to Hendrix (appendix 9), a number of 'brackets' are included in the environmental law that come from already existing laws with a view to indirectly contribute

to a solution or prevent VABs. Van Extel (Appendix 2) stated, however, that the introduction of the environmental law also has disadvantages with regard to solving VABs in the corresponding municipality. According to Van Extel (appendix 2), a large quantity of money is marked for the preparations for the environmental law, while this money is also desperately needed to solve the VAB problems. In addition, some of the employees work on preparing and implementing the environmental law, while in Van Extel's eyes, this time could also be spent solving VABs. Van Extel (appendix 2) would like to see the arrival of the environmental law postponed. According to Van de Ven, the environmental law offers the opportunity for governments, private individuals and entrepreneurs to work together. The environmental law offers more room for private ideas because more general rules apply instead of detailed permits (Central Government, ndg). According to various respondents, this corresponds to the fact that the population has become more empowered. For example, local residents' tolerance level of a farm is lower than before, and the police are sometimes called before the neighbors confront each other about their behavior (Geurts, appendix 2). The tolerance level also concerns with the area in which one lives. Van Extel (Appendix 2) provided the example that when the new neighbour comes from a nearby village, the tolerance level is higher than when the new neighbour comes from another area.

Living is also one of the themes that currently plays a dominant role in spatial planning (Haije, appendix 9; Van de Ven, appendix 4). The Randstad, for example, has experienced population growth, while the cities in the northern and eastern outskirts of the Netherlands have experienced population decline (Butz, Appendix 7; Planning Agency for the Living Environment, 2016). This means that the Randstad faces a housing shortage, and the eastern and northern cities suffer from a housing surplus (Planning Agency for the Living Environment, 2016). According to Van de Ven (appendix 4), living and working in the outlying area will become a problem in the next 10 years because much more has to be built and the ground pressure in cities becomes high, while the rural area has a large number of buildings that are released. In addition to Regions in which there is a surplus of housing, there are also Regions in which there is a surplus of social real estate. For example, some of the churches and shops in Brabant are vacant (Van Merrienboer, Appendix 3). According to Van de Ven (appendix 4), the vacancy of stores is partly due to the rise of Internet trade. According to Van Merrienboer and Niezen, aging is also a development currently taking place in a large number of areas.

A development that was imminent was a ban on asbestos roofs starting in 2024 because asbestos is harmful to human, animal and environmental health. However, the government's bill was rejected on 4 June.

4.2 Developments in the agricultural sector

As described in chapter 4.1, the government has taken measures to achieve the objectives related to climate change. As a result, the number of environmental laws has increased, and the laws have become stricter. Farms in the vicinity of nature reserves, in particular, are subject to strict requirements with regard to nitrogen emissions. If the activities of an agricultural company may have adverse consequences for a protected nature area, the farmer can appeal to the Nitrogen Approach Program (PAS). In this program, in which the central government, provinces, entrepreneurs and nature organisations work together, recovery measures are taken to make nature more resistant to nitrogen overload (Ministry of LNV, nd). The most important laws that play a role in this context are the Nature Conservation Act, the

Ammonia and Livestock Act, the Odour Nuisance and Livestock Act and the assessment framework for particulate matter (Rijkswaterstaat, nd).

In the context of climate change, the agricultural sector has undergone a transition from conventional agriculture to organic farming. In the production of organic food, environment and animal welfare are taken into account as much as possible (Voedingscentrum, nd). In this way, manure surpluses are prevented, and animals are given more room than in conventional livestock farming and agriculture (Voedingscentrum, nd). However, Drenth (Appendix 5) stated that it is not desirable for all agricultural businesses to become organic because they do not have to comply with environmental laws.

A development that is in line with the transition from conventional to organic farming is the future 'Subsidy Scheme for Pig Farms' scheme, which is expected open in August of 2019. This scheme is aimed at accelerating the transition to a vital, robust, future-proof and sustainable pig farming chain that is socially accepted and valued (National Government, 2018). This approach focuses on substantially reducing odour nuisance from pig farms for local residents on the basis of two tracks, namely remediation/termination and innovation/sustainability (Central Government, 2018). This leads to the elimination of the most persistent odour nuisance situations in livestock-tight areas and to the reduction of harmful gaseous emissions from stables (National Government, 2018). Municipalities are busy raising awareness among farmers with regard to the possibilities that the scheme offers (Van Extel, Appendix 2).

In addition to the climate, society also influences the agricultural sector, for example, with a change in its wishes with regard to the food it consumes. In recent years, there has been a trend to consume locally produced, sustainable food (Haije, Appendix 8). However, the willingness to pay more is generally lacking, according to former UN rapporteur Olivier de Schutter (Vos, nd). As a result, farmers have started to produce more sustainably at the same cost price, and in order to be able to meet the increasingly high (environmental) requirements at lower production rates, more and more farmers opt to scale up (Van de Ven, appendix 4). In addition, large supermarkets have become increasingly powerful and have large profit margins, in contrast to the low prices that farmers receive (De Kruijf, appendix 9). According to De Kruijf (appendix 9), farmers are forced to increase their scale because the profit margins are so small, and many animals are needed to make the business profitable. Another way to make the company more profitable is by developing secondary branches, such as home sales, farm education or a bed and breakfast (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3; Drenth, appendix 5). Currently, 25% of farmers have opted for a secondary branch (Wageningen University & Research, 2019). This could also contribute to the image of the sector. In particular, people who are far removed from the sector can have a negative image about animal welfare, or the means of production and business expansion can be a way to find a connection between these parties (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3). The agricultural sector has come under increasing pressure due to developments in nature and the environment and increased social pressure.

Another societal debate concerns the desirability of solar farmers (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3). Solar farmers are part of the Solar Ladder, which consists of three steps in hierarchical order: ground-based sun on the roof, ground-based sun on ground level within the urban environment and ground-based solar initiatives with social support outside existing urban areas (province of Drenthe, nd). The transformation from fertile agricultural land to fields with

solar panels provides solar energy, but this occurs at the expense of fertile land, drives up the land price and is harmful to nature (Doorn, 2018).

4.3 Vacant agricultural buildings

4.3.1 History

The agricultural sector has undergone countless developments in recent decades. Agricultural mechanisation is a development that has had a major impact; it took place at the end of the 19th century after the industrial revolution and has meant that fewer workers are needed because more and more work has been taken over by machines, which has reduced employment in the agricultural sector (Compendium for the living environment, 2009). In addition to employment, the area of agricultural land has also become smaller (butz, annex 7); it decreased by 196,400 hectares between 2000 and 2018 (wur, 2018). To be able to grow and produce enough on less land to remain profitable as a business, farmers have intensified their businesses (Compendium for the living environment, 2009). This has ensured that the pressure per square metre of soil has increased with regard to livestock, crops and the associated crop protection agents, (artificial) manure and the use of heavy machinery for which the water level had to be lowered (Compendium for the living environment, 2009). To protect the flora and fauna of the agricultural area, the government has taken measures, both voluntary and incentive, such as subsidies or statutory injunctions and prohibitions (Compendium for the living environment, 2009). Examples of this are manure legislation, subsidies for the maintenance of small landscape elements, the introduction of milk quotas and the prohibition of certain pesticides (Compendium for the living environment, 2009). As a result of stimulation from the central government, in the form of (subsidy) schemes in the past, and in order to be able to meet all measures and requirements, some farmers have chosen to enlarge their farms, which is also called scaling up (Compendium for the living environment, 2009). With a view towards improving the agricultural sector, land consolidation has taken place, although the land development law from 1979 was more focused on landscape and nature (Compendium for the living environment, 2009).

In 1997, classical swine fever (CSF) took place in the Netherlands, and a total of 1,800,000 pigs were culled (Bruijnen, 2008). At the time, a number of measures were taken to prevent the further spread of the CSF, namely culling infected farms, appointing surveillance zones, a transport ban, welfare culling, preventive culling and a breeding ban (Bruijnen, 2008). The consequence of this was that it cost pig farmers €403 million. To address this, farmers took out loans and received help from the government through various financial schemes and subsidies (from mare farmer, Appendix 3). After a political discussion, it was decided that the government should offer more support to farmers in difficult weather, including demolition and termination schemes (Haije, Appendix 8). At the time, the government made related agreements with municipalities and provinces, from which regulations emerged, such as scrapping schemes and, for example, the red-for-green scheme (haije, Appendix 8).

According to Van Merrienboer (appendix 3), business management has changed over the years from mixed farms to mono farms, a process that is also known as specialisation (Compendium for the living environment, 2009). Every time another generation took over the company, a new choice was made. Moreover, succession has never been a problem, given the baby boomer generation of the last century (van merrienboer, appendix 3).

4.3.2 Causes

A number of respondents named the soil type as one of the causes of the occurrence of VABs (De Ridder, appendix 6; Drenth, appendix 5; Butz, appendix 7). For example, clay soil is fertile and suitable for growing crops, while sandy soil is poor and not suitable (De Ridder, appendix 6). This means that poor sandy soils are used for intensive livestock farming, in particular, pig farms and poultry farms. All respondents cited intensive livestock farming as the cause of agricultural vacancy. If the maps with regard to agricultural type per Region and expectation of VABs per Region, as shown in figure 14, are compared, it can be seen that most VABs are indeed expected in the Regions with mainly pig and poultry farms.

According to Drenth (appendix 5), this also concerns the fact that, among Catholics, the farm

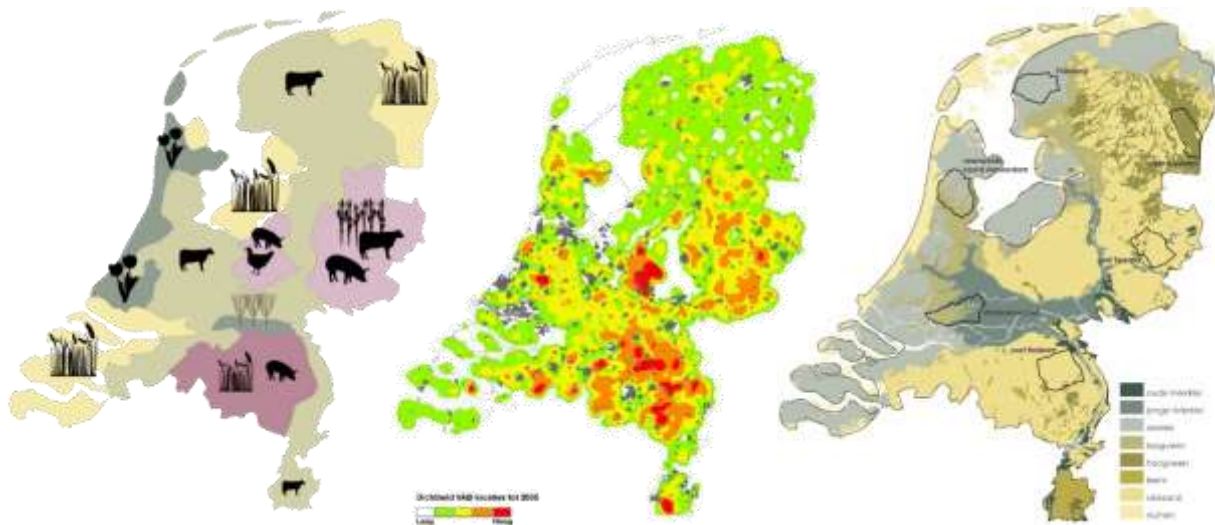


Figure 14: Map of agricultural types (left), VAB forecast map (center), map of soil types (right) (Bron: Vleemingsh, n.d.; Gies, Nieuwenhuizen & Smidt, 2014)

is divided among the number of children, while with Protestants the farm is given to the eldest son or daughter, so the company remains intact (Drenth, appendix 5). According to Drenth (Appendix 5), this is the reason large farms can be found in the Protestant areas, and the small businesses stop because they can no longer compete with the large companies.

According to Van Merrienboer (appendix 3), however, this shift was related to swine fever about 15 years ago, after which the sector with significant borrowed capital was rebuilt, while these companies might no longer have been viable at the time. There was, therefore, a good chance that, if it were financially unfavourable, the company would be forced to stop, and the business buildings would become vacant. According to Drenth (appendix 5), intensive-scale farming is where most scaling up takes place, which means that many small businesses stop in that sector as they are too small to be able to meet the strict environmental requirements and necessary investments. There is also a strong relationship between intensive livestock farming and the need to remove buildings (Van Nieuwenhuizen, appendix 9). For example, the need to remove the vacant buildings at former pig houses or chicken houses is greater due to the type of buildings. Pig and chicken houses consist mainly of stone and generally contain a relatively large amount of asbestos. In arable barns or cowsheds, it is usually only roofs that contain asbestos, but in pig and chicken stalls, it is also in the walls and concrete subsurface (De Ridder, appendix 6). All of this ensures that the building cannot easily be reused; first, it must be demolished. Demolition is generally unattractive for farmers because it is costly,

especially when the building contains asbestos (De Ridder, appendix 6; Drenth, appendix 5; Haije, appendix 8; De Wit; appendix 2). In addition to the costs of demolishing a building, the costs for tax settlement when a business is discontinued also play a role. For example, farmers whose businesses are no longer profitable try to keep the business running at all costs so that they do not officially stop the business to avoid dealing with the tax authorities (De Wit, appendix 2; Van Merrienboer, appendix 3; Butz, appendix 7; De Kruijf, appendix 9; De Ridder, appendix 6). This ensures that agricultural buildings on paper are still in use, but this is not actually the case (Niezen, appendix 2; Van Merrienboer, appendix 3; De Ridder, appendix 6).

Another economic cause is the changing functioning of the market in recent decades. As discussed earlier in this chapter, many subsidies or schemes in the past have had the aim of financially supporting farmers and innovating the sector. However, this has meant that many farmers have been able to remain financially solvent, while this would not have been possible with the actual operation of the market (without the subsidies and schemes). According to De Ridder (appendix 6), it has grown so much that the buyer determines the price instead of the person who sells the product, which is a consequence of the free market; as a result, the margins are small and the risks are large (Van de Ven, Appendix 4, De Ridder, Appendix 6). According to De Ridder (appendix 6), entrepreneurship has never been sought, and farmers thus did not think about the future properly. This ensures that companies are less future-proof and cannot keep up later.

In addition to these cultural-historical and economic causes of VABs, a number of social causes can also be mentioned. For example, farmers are sometimes unable to stop their businesses from an emotional point of view, especially with family businesses. In some cases, the farmer cannot accept that he or she is the generation to cause the company to stop (Drenth, Appendix 5). In such cases, the farmer tries to keep the agricultural destination so that the farm does not truly stop. The lack of follow-up, in combination with an aging population in the sector, can also cause an agricultural business to cease and the associated buildings to become vacant, with all the associated consequences. In the time of the proverbial 'baby boom', succession was not a problem, but after, the number of children taking over parental companies fell sharply (Hendrix, appendix 8; Van Merrienboer, appendix 3; Van de Ven, appendix 4; Drenth, appendix 5 ; De Ridder, appendix 6).

Another cause of the occurrence of VABs is whether a change of function can be applied. This means that redirection is easier in some areas than in others because, for example, of the type of buildings, as discussed earlier in this chapter, but also because of the demand for other functions, which is higher in areas in the Randstad than in the east and extreme north of the country. According to Butz (appendix 7), this is also the reason that the vacancy problem in the western Netherlands is smaller than in the southeastern Netherlands; economic activity is lower there, and there are fewer residential building assignments (Hendrix, appendix 8). According to Butz (appendix 7), a lack of knowledge and capacity in small municipalities does not contribute to preventing or solving the VAB problems.

4.3.3 Effects

The reason VABs are often regarded as a problem is because they affect the quality of the rural, and therefore common, area. For example, Niezen (appendix 2) stated that a large amount of VABs affects the quality of life in villages because the vacant buildings are usually

no longer maintained and therefore deteriorate (Hendrix, appendix 8; Niezen, appendix 2; Van Merrienboer; appendix 3; De Ridder, appendix 6; respondent 1, appendix 10). When there is more impoverishment in the outlying area, it is no longer interesting for young entrepreneurs or young residents to stay in the village, and they move away from the area (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3; Drenth, appendix 5; Sneezing, Appendix 2). In addition to deterioration, another common, adverse effect of VABs is that they are used for criminal activities. This refers in particular to the cultivation of marijuana plants, usually not by the farmer himself (Drenth, Appendix 5). Former farmers who still have empty agricultural stables sometimes rent these out so that they still earn something. However, the empty barns are highly sought after by criminals who, with or without the knowledge of the farmer, grow such plants. It sometimes happens that criminals put farmers under pressure to let them use the empty stables (De Ridder, appendix 6). Hendrix (appendix 9) also stated that it is a waste of space to leave VABs because the space pressure is high, the need for other functions is high and it affects the quality of life in the countryside.

4.3.4 Expectations

The expectations with regard to agricultural buildings that will be released in the coming years concern the majority of respondents in the respective Regions. The municipality of Gemert-Bakel, for example, has estimated that at least 120 farmers will stop farming in the coming years (Van Extel, Appendix 2). The province of Brabant has calculated that, currently, 15% of the farms in the province meet the criteria for circular agriculture, which means that the remaining 85% do not meet this requirement and are forced to invest in the short term or in time for the company to stop (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3). De Ridder (appendix 6) expects that the housing decision, which will be released in early 2020, will ensure that the number of detached agricultural buildings will increase. According to De Ridder (appendix 6), the same applies for subsequent years. It is expected that even more than a third of the 400 existing companies will stop in the next 10 years (De Ridder, appendix 6). According to Butz (appendix 7) and De Kruijf (appendix 9), the problem is not significant at the moment, but the task for the future is substantial. The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality believes that striving to achieve the nature objectives and the current housing challenges will contribute to the number of farmers that will stop in the near future (Haije, appendix 8; Hendrix, appendix 8).

4.4. Visions of the rural area

Basically, the respondents agree that owners are always primarily responsible for their own buildings. However, since the large number of VABs causes social problems, as discussed in chapter 4.3, the responsibility may also lie with other parties. The respondents described their vision of the problem.

De Ridder (appendix 6) believes that, in the context of preventing VABs, efforts must be made to raise awareness among farmers and officials about the future. Van Merrienboer (appendix 3) also emphasised the value of an adequate future perspective for the sector, as Minister Schouten currently does, as well. According to Van Merrienboer (appendix 3), housing construction tasks can be used to help farmers demolish stables and maintain the quality of life in the centres. The building rights of 15 years ago are no longer sufficient to rebuild houses; new social value must be created by tackling the vacancy of today, according to Van Merrienboer (appendix 3). He wants immediate results, and he asked municipalities to create

visions that makes sense and then there is 'enough' possible at the Province of Brabant (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3). According to Niezen (Appendix 2), the focus should be on the combination of the companies in the process of stopping and those that continue in one area. The question asked here is the following: *'How can you get it done in such a way that you and those companies that are still growing that can still continue and that the stoppers can coexist?'* (Sneezing, Appendix 2, p. 2). According to De Ridder (appendix 6), livestock farming around the cores is not desirable, and it is important to limit nuisance as much as possible. According to Niezen (appendix 2), starting companies should be directly on a business park because this is how they anticipate the future. De Ridder (appendix 6) also sees advantages in clustering agricultural companies, and by locating any new companies directly at a desired location, problems can be prevented in the future (Van Extel, appendix 2). According to Van Extel (appendix 2), it is important that provinces and municipalities work together. Deputy Van Merrienboer also confirmed this (appendix 3) and stated that there are regular reports that initiators and entrepreneurs feel confused by the government because the various government layers provide different information.

Drenth (Appendix 5) sees it as the province's task to ensure the prosperity and well-being of its inhabitants and is therefore concerned about the large number of stopping farmers. If farmers cannot sell their farms en masse but can bear the costs, this leads to an impoverished population. He therefore prefers preventing agricultural development from being released to solving it if it is already a problem (Drenth, Appendix 5). One way to do this is by stimulating new forms of agriculture that address other niches. The province of Gelderland deliberately does not encourage farmers to become organic because organic farmers do not have to comply with environmental laws (Drenth, Appendix 5). Drenth (appendix 5) also believes that the Netherlands should continue to play an important role in providing food for the world because the nation offers scope for growing food, while this is impossible in some parts of the world. Drenth (Appendix 5) does have doubts about the current rules and their hindrance in the transition of agriculture; he wonders whether it is necessary to include the rules in the transition. De Ridder (appendix 6) also believes that the current policy should be included in the transition. She argued that development-oriented frameworks must be outlined within which innovation, new ideas and other forms of business can take place and where more attention is paid to what effects and image quality must be achieved (De Ridder, appendix 6.).

Van Merrienboer (appendix 3) also set the goal that farmers must be able to remain socially and economically independent. Switching to other activities and product diversification can be an option, but changing earnings models may also be a possibility (De Ridder, appendix 6; Van de Ven, appendix 4). For example, there could be a focus on increasing the profit per product so that farmers can manage with fewer animals, and more farmers have a chance (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3; Van de Ven, appendix 4; De Kruijf, appendix 9). An objective of the Ministry of LNV is described in the vision document 'Valuable and connected' and relates to the farmers' earning model. It describes how, when farmers are required to invest in sustainability and to clean their stables, they must therefore earn enough to be able to do so (Hendrix, Appendix 8). Regarding the earnings model, the profit margins for farmers should be higher (De Kruijf, appendix 9). This is due to the high profit margins that supermarkets currently gain, which leaves a lower price for the farmer (De Kruijf, appendix 9). According to De Kruijf (appendix 9), the farmer and the quality of the rural area are ultimately the victims of this.

The transition to a more ecological form of agriculture is also a goal of Van Merrienboer (appendix 3), which seeks out local markets or direct supply to consumers. According to Hendrix (appendix 8), the redevelopment of agricultural buildings is also a way of completing the business case of an agricultural company in order to facilitate demolition, so efforts must be made as much as possible.

Van de Ven (Appendix 4) sees the release of agricultural buildings not as a problem in itself, but also as an opportunity. When something is released, there is also room for new developments, such as business expansion, but also developments with regard to climate, energy, living, liveability and care (Van de Ven, appendix 4).

5. Spatial instruments

This chapter relates to the spatial instruments. Chapter 5.1 discusses spatial instruments that municipalities and provinces can use to solve the VAB problems based on desk research. Spatial instruments are all policy documents, regulations and laws. A distinction is made between government policy in general; government policy in the field of VABs; the province of Gelderland and Noord-Brabant; and the municipalities of Ede, Barneveld, Deurne, Gemert-Bakel, Meijerijstad, Nederweert and Someren. In chapter 5.2, based on the interviews, it is described how the spatial instruments are used, where the problems are and what is needed from provinces and municipalities.

5.1 Current spatial VAB instruments

5.1.1 Government policy general

Just like provinces and municipalities, in a **structural vision**, the central government describes what developments it expects in the field of spatial planning. For example, in the Structural Vision Infrastructure and Spatial Planning (SVIR), the National Government describes how the Netherlands should look in 2040 (Central Government nd a). The central government also focuses on protecting national spatial interests and uses the '**Decree on general rules for spatial planning**' ("**Bro**") (Central government nd a). In spatial policy, provinces and municipalities implement the **urbanisation and landscape policy**, which is described in the Spatial Policy Document from 2006, and draw up structural plans. Municipalities perform tasks that are directly relevant to their residents and draft zoning plans (Central Government nd b). The national government checks whether the area plans of provinces and municipalities are in conflict with national interests (and therefore the structural vision). The provinces then verify whether the municipal zoning plans are in conflict with the provincial structure plans, which specify a framework for the desired spatial structure (Central Government nd a).

The **Spatial Planning Act** ("**Wro**"), which will soon be replaced by the **Environmental Act**, regulates how the spatial plans of the central government, provinces and municipalities are established and amended (Central Government nd a). Planning procedures are arranged in the Wro, such as making integration plans by provinces and drawing up zoning plans by municipalities. The **General Provisions on Environmental Law** ("**Wabo**") describes how to deviate from the zoning plan. The zoning plan can be deviated from by means of an indoor plan deviation, an environmental permit based on **the decision on environmental law** ("**bor**") or an outdoor plan deviation. It is also possible via the BOR to perform activities without a permit. For the outlying area, it is possible to temporarily deviate from the zoning plan.

5.1.2 Government policy VABs

The Environment Act, which goes into effect from 2021, addresses a government vision of the living environment: the Vision **National Environment ("NOVI")**. This report summarises societal challenges across four priorities, two of which have a common ground with the VAB problem, namely 'strong, viable and climate-proof cities and Regions with sufficient space to live, work and move' and 'future-proof development of the rural area' (Central government d, nd).

When developing agricultural policy, the central government has to take into account the European **Common Agricultural Policy ("CAP")**, which applies until 2020. The focus in the CAP is on promoting sustainable agriculture and new agricultural techniques. The CAP consists of two parts, namely agricultural subsidies and rural development subsidies. The **rural development programme ("POP3")** is the European subsidy programme for making the Dutch countryside more sustainable, innovative and developed, and it consists of both government grants and provincial grants. With regard to agricultural subsidies, the additional payment to young farmers is the most relevant to the SAB theme. This scheme is also referred to as **the Asset-Enhancing Credit Guarantee Scheme** and is aimed at making it more attractive for financiers to provide a loan to young farmers who start or take over a business and, at the same time, want to invest in sustainable business development (Central Government, nd c). Part of the budget for POP3 is reserved for **LEADER areas**. In these areas, which have been designated by provinces, residents consider the development of their area. None of the municipalities that are central to this study are part of a LEADER area (futureglb.nl, nd).

In the structural vision of infrastructure and space, vacancy is one of the developments anticipated (Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, 2012). It describes how the need for offices, business locations and residential zones in most areas will be smaller than in past decades. Among other aspects, aging and vacancy are the consequences of this. As a solution to this problem, in 2012, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment developed the **Ladder for Sustainable Urbanisation**, which is aimed at the efficient, careful and sustainable use of space. This ladder is part of the Spatial Planning Decree (Bro) and ensures that the competent authority (provinces and municipalities) meet a justification requirement if new urban developments are made possible in terms of planning (Infomil, nda). The ladder consisted of three steps until 2017, but it has been brought back to one provision. It must be noted that there is a Regionnal need for new planned urban development, and it needs to be determined to what extent the need can be met in existing urban areas by utilising available land through restructuring, transformation or other means (Van der Heijde, Van Oosten & Span, 2017).

In addition to the Ladder for Sustainable Urbanisation, the central government has also developed the **Rural Housing Act**. This law ensures that a former agricultural company home that has been separated from livestock farming can be inhabited by third parties, and that this home can be excluded from assessments regarding odour and noise nuisance and external safety. From a legal planning perspective, it is possible because a lower level of protection is assigned to the rural home than to a civilian home. After all, the planning status (instead of the actual use) determines the protection of a country house (InfoMil, nd). However, it only applies to the former associated livestock farming, as the assessment with regard to environmental standards of other surrounding farms is still valid (InfoMil, nd).

Another rule that may be relevant for VABs is that of **asbestos remediation**. Indeed, there is a possibility that companies may be obligated to perform asbestos remediation, given a regulation in progress that would prohibit asbestos roofs starting on 31 December 2024 (Central Government, nd e).

With regard to the division of roles in the domain of spatial development and the physical living environment, the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment envisions that provinces play a cross-sector and connecting role at the (inter-) Regionnal level: *'The province acts as an area director by developing integrated development visions, balancing and aligning interests and monitoring and promoting complementarity between cities and between Regionns within the province'* (Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment, 2012, p. 11). With regard to the role of the central government, three criteria guide the formulation of spatial government policy. The VAB problem would fall under one of those criteria, namely, a subject that crosses the province or land border and that either has a high risk of passing on or is managed by the government (Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, 2012).

5.1.3 Province of Noord-Brabant

The vacancy rates in the province of Brabant are the highest in the Netherlands in terms of agricultural buildings (Alterra, 2014; Gies, 2019). According to WER (Province of Noord-Brabant, nd), a quarter of all stables in Brabant will be vacant by 2030, which amounts to 2.5 million square metres. This vacancy mainly takes place in the east of the province. The structural vision of Noord-Brabant (2014) emphasises the increasing importance of Regionnal agreements to prevent vacancy.

In the environmental vision of Noord-Brabant (2018), agricultural vacancy is part of one of the four main tasks for the future. In the coalition agreement of Noord-Brabant 2015-2019, vacancy is also one of the six themes, and efforts have been made to redevelop it as 'the new building' (Noord-Brabant, 2015). Regarding the approach to the VAB problem, the province of Noord-Brabant also focuses on developing expertise on the theme and supporting local initiatives, whereby an integral approach is encouraged (Noord-Brabant, 2014). In the report 'Brabant approach to vacancy', the position of the province of Noord-Brabant is that the owner remains primarily responsible for his property at all times (Province of Noord-Brabant, 2016). In addition, it states that the municipalities are the first government that should address agricultural vacancy because they are responsible for public space (Province of Noord-Brabant, 2016). In addition, the province of Noord-Brabant (2016) emphasizes that cooperation between scales within the government is a pure necessity for solving the VAB problems. This approach is in line with the principles of the Environment Act. The province of Noord-Brabant (2016) aims to play a supporting role and sees itself as a knowledge supplier, area director, commissioning party and quality assurance officer. The province of Noord-Brabant (2016) also states that vacancy does not necessarily have to be a problem, since friction vacancy is even desirable for a good ark functioning. The province of Noord-Brabant (2016) stated that the connection with its social tasks must be the guiding motive for its commitment to vacancy, and it must use three directions in the approach to vacancy: giving direction, stimulating movement and making it possible.

'Giving direction' means that a joint analysis is made of supply and demand in the Regionn and that a Regionnal agenda is drafted. 'Stimulating movement' refers to giving a joint impetus to its implementation by drawing up plans and connecting parties. The 'make possible' pillar is

aimed at realizing transformations by the partners who are responsible for this. If necessary, active cooperation from the province in the form of manpower, knowledge and finances is possible.

Regarding the spatial instruments of the province of Noord-Brabant (2016) in combination with the three pillars, an overview has been made, as shown in figure 15.

Richting geven*)	Beweging stimuleren*)	Mogelijk maken*)
Gemeenten en provincie aan zet	Eigenaren en nieuwe ruimtegebruikers aan zet	Financiers aan zet
Provinciaal instrument: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structuurvisie ruimtelijke ordening en Verordening ruimte zijn kaderstellend Takelcase ondersteunend aan gemeenten bij hun visievorming en aanpassing verordening Effectiever gebruik 'ladder voor duurzame verstedelijking' Afspraken maken, (de) en (vraaggericht) programmeren bevorderen, plus inzetten naleving Ondersteuning bij bezicht en handhaving in buitengebied en eventueel stedelijk gebied (bedrijfslocaties) Leegstandafspraken samen met gemeenten ook borgen in andere grens, zoals Regionale Ruimtelijk Overleggen. 	Provinciaal instrument: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ondersteuning eigenaren en nieuwe ruimtegebruikers in beginstadium planproces (proccassteun) Holder communiceren mogelijkheden en onmogelijkheden vanuit provinciale optiek Deelname in lobby op thema's waardoor in beweging komen aantrekkelijker wordt bijvoorbeeld fiscale lobby) regie pakken om partijen bij elkaar te brengen of tot beweging te komen (partmanagemnt, bedrijfsrelaties, e.d.) Pilots en (sub)regionale aanpak stimuleren Kenniscirculatie transformaties, best practices, ervaringen uit living labs, e.d. 	Provinciaal instrument: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> m' voor m' regelingen effectief inzetten, ook voor stedelijk gebied Buizende financiële regelingen effectief benutten, vooral landelijk gebied Nieuw instrumentarium samen met anderen ontwikkelen: inzet Ontwikkelbedrijf voor transformaties Handreiking met Euro sloop om transformatiekosten te minimaliseren

Figure 15: Pillars 'Brabant approach to vacancy' (Bron: Noord-Brabant, 2016)

Deprogramming is used to remove planning capacity from the market so that the playing field for new construction is reduced. According to the province of Noord-Brabant (2016), this is an important precondition for addressing vacancy. However, the province cannot obligate a municipality to deprogram. The province can influence this by including direct rules in the Space-for-Space Regulation that prohibit the construction of new businesses/homes in specifically designated areas with the requirement that municipalities change the zoning plan for this prohibition to fit (Province of Noord-Brabant, 2016). To reduce the risk of a claim for damages, policy must first be developed that creates a certain foreseeability that existing options will be removed.

Question-oriented computer programming aims to be able to respond flexibly to a rapidly changing demand for space. It is important here that deprogramming existing (empty) buildings or sites also applies (Province of Noord-Brabant, 2016).

For a better coordination of planning capacity and space, the government signed the **demandRetail Deal**. This consists of a Retail Advisory Committee, which provides integral advice with a scope beyond retail and consists of independent, expert members.

Strong Brabant Network consists of acceleration agendas and Regionnal networks. In acceleration agendas (or cooperation agendas), the province makes agreements with the municipalities involved for each of the four Regionns regarding overlapping goals. Each of the parties involved contributes to the realisation of those goals through its own or joint action. Together with the parties involved, it is considered which vacancy targets can be given a place in these cooperation agendas. Regionnal and sub-Regionnal agreements are also made via Regionnal networks. Where Regionns want start an approach to combat vacancy, mutual

consultation is conducted to determine how these initiatives can best be facilitated (Province of Noord-Brabant, 2016).

In the area of supervising environmental permits, in 2016, the province of Noord-Brabant started the project '*investment supervision livestock farming*'. The aim is to gain more insight into the current vacancy situation and to use the data for monitoring purposes, policy adjustments and determining enforcement priorities (Noord-Brabant, 2016).

Because municipalities and the province of Noord-Brabant coordinate better in advance, the quality of *zoning plans* has improved considerably, and the province's intervention is needed less often. According to the province of Noord-Brabant, there is still room for improvement in the supervision of municipalities themselves for compliance with the zoning plan (Noord-Brabant, 2016). With regard to the province's financial supervision of municipalities, the vacancy issue is not a point of attention.

The the Spatial Planning Regulation *Space-for-Space* Scheme has been established, which arose from the 'Termination of livestock farming' scheme. The aim was to remove the phosphate rights from the market, but in order to prevent a vacancy wave, the province of North Brabant combined this with a demolition subsidy. In order to earn back the money that the province spent on the demolition subsidy, the Space-to- space was created, which states the following: *'And although the demolition subsidy was already closed in 2010, it still applies that for every 1000 m2 demolition of pig or poultry houses (including the surrender of phosphate rights and official company termination) there is the right to one building title on a planological designation to be designated by the municipality acceptable location'* (Province of Noord-Brabant, 2016). The builder does not have to be the demolition worker. According to the province of Noord-Brabant (2016), the question is whether the Space-to- space policy can be made more effective, for example by extending the scheme to the dairy-farming sector. This could lead to more stable demolition, although it is not expected that the largest vacancy will occur in that sector. In this sector, it is desirable to allow new construction of a house at the demolition site, so that it is more attractive and easier for the stopping farmers to convert the demolition of their stables into one or more building titles on their own site (Noord-Brabant, 2016). However, this wish does not correspond with the urbanisation policy and the current aim to prevent the fossilisation of the countryside (Noord-Brabant, 2016).

On the basis of "*staldering*", the number of pigs and the manure production can be stabilised (Province of Noord-Brabant, 2016). Stalling permits the right to expand a pigsty by the number of square metres that are demolished elsewhere (financed by the same person). In 2016, no positive effect of stalling was measured, since a barn with pigs was demolished for a stable elsewhere where the same amount of pigs. By obliging "stalderen" the province of Noord-Brabant (2016) expects that the wave of stoppers will not cause problems in 2020. The province of Noord-Brabant (2016) suggests that the accessibility of residual result objectives could possibly be increased by adjusting the m2-m2 ratio.

The '*Spatial Quality Regulation*' is also laid down in the Spatial Planning Regulation. This means that investments in landscape quality are made without further intervention by the government, thus providing room for development, provided that part of the added value it creates is invested in improving the quality of the landscape (Province of Noord-Brabant,

2016). The investment is often made on private land or in the immediate vicinity, but it can also be deposited into a municipal fund. The province of Noord-Brabant (2016) proposed further discussing the importance of the 'compulsory demolition of real estate' with municipalities and to improve the enforcement thereof. Mandatory demolition of real estate occurs in some cases, for example, if an agricultural location is re-used as a home or non-agricultural activity (Province of Noord-Brabant, 2016). Whether this scheme actually contributes to the demolition of VABs is still unclear.

The scheme 'asbestos removed, solar panels on it' made it possible for solar panels to be placed on VABs, and it thus contributed to the reallocation of VABs (Province of Noord-Brabant, 2016). Since 2017, the government has only offered subsidies for 'asbestos off', and the provinces have to arrange the solar panels themselves. This offers opportunities for new combinations in terms of regulations and vacancy control. According to the province of Noord-Brabant (2016), the conversion of former agricultural building blocks into sunbathing areas may be an opportunity. In addition, the Sun scheme has been developed in the emergency areas in North Brabant with the aim of eliminating legalized nuisance. This subsidy scheme focuses on three aspects: adapting the company, relocating the company and company termination. When relocating or stopping an agricultural business, the location is given a purpose other than livestock farming, and surplus buildings are demolished at the full expense of the government.

In October 2017, the province of Noord-Brabant, in collaboration with municipalities in Brabant and other countries, started the 'VAB impulse' approach to support owners of empty stables or barns in finding a new perspective in the form of re-use or demolition (Brabant.nl, 2017). The VAB incentive consists of two elements, namely a voucher scheme and a knowledge platform. The voucher scheme is intended for VAB owners and owners of livestock farms who seek a solution and/or another (agricultural) business activity (Brabant, nd). The knowledge platform on VABs includes expert process supervisors, specialists and governments who bundle their knowledge and advice concerning the possibilities of the future of VABs (Brabant, nd).

5.1.4 Province of Gelderland

One of the main goals of the environmental vision of the province of Gelderland in 2018 is to guarantee the quality and safety of our living environment. The province wants to do this, among other initiatives, by offering a basis for reducing vacancy and overcapacity in plans (province of Gelderland, 2018). The province stated that the nature and location of vacant buildings determines whether it is experienced as a problem.

One aspect the province of Gelderland (2018a) manages is invitation planning, and the coalition programmementioned the importance of programming for agricultural real estate. In addition, the province of Gelderland (2018a) stated in its environmental vision that the government must remove barriers to redevelopment in the form of restrictive regulations.

The vital countryside agenda of the province of Gelderland (2018) aims for sustainable agriculture that contributes to an economically healthy and livable countryside. Vacancy on agricultural real estate plays a major role in this, especially given the 6.3 million square metres that will be released in the coming years there. According to the province of Gelderland, the

primary responsibility for taking action is with the owner at all times. There are no provincial frameworks for Spatial Planning or for functional change (NVM, 2017a). According to NVM (2017a), the province does apply policies in which there must be social added value in the case of expansion of non-land-based livestock farms. This is also referred to as the **Plus Policy** (NVM, 2017a). An example of this is the remediation of existing stables (NVM, 2017a). The role of the province could consist of driving processes by supporting example projects or by disseminating experience and knowledge. According to the province, municipalities can help owners start by informing them about the possibilities and impossibilities. The province of Gelderland (2018) has tried to use the Vital Countryside agenda to provide concrete ideas for initiatives or instruments that can help support owners or municipalities. Work is underway in the Achterhoek on a deal with the central government in which vacant agricultural real estate is one of the sectors in which agreements are made. In addition, the province is investigating whether the instrument **Real Estate Development Company** can fulfil the function of accelerating processes of re-use. In addition to the Agenda for vital rural areas, the province of Gelderland also supports the VAB theme on the basis of the **Third Rural Development Programme (POP3)** and the Stoneware Use Programme (Gelderland, 2018a).

As part of the POP3, the Innovative Concepts Grant Scheme was opened in 2018. The focus of this subsidy is on improving the spatial quality of the Gelderland countryside, and it is provided to an interdisciplinary partnership for the (further) development of an innovative concept. This aligns well with another programme in which the province of Gelderland has a supporting role, namely the competition **Bread and Games**. This involves looking for radical, realistic and feasible proposals for the future of the countryside. VABs can be part of this, and the submitters of the winning proposals each receive €25,000 for the development of their project. Projects that have been financed in recent years in Gelderland on the basis of POP3 are 'Land in connection', 'Startersboerderij' and 'Break through former agricultural business locations'.

The programme **Stoneware Utilisation**, which is included in the 2016-2019 provincial coalition programme, aims at developing and sharing knowledge with regard to image-determining locations with a social impact. A subsidy is possible when improving the environment. A subsidy can be requested for the transformation or redevelopment of specific image-defining buildings in the outlying area, including VABs. The **FoodValley Regionn** is also creating a programme that focuses on the development of new fiscal and financial instruments and constructions, pilot projects, policy review and the dissemination of knowledge about re-use. During a conversation in preparation for the Stoneware Utilisation program, it was found that the VAB theme often erred due to a lack of knowledge and capacity with regard to the acceleration of job changes. This is especially the case with small municipalities: *'It is precisely this topic that is often about creating thinking power, about new functions, for which there is no script yet and that cannot be easily integrated into existing rules. The FoodValley Regionn wants to unlock this knowledge in one bundle'* (Foodvalley Regionn, 2018, p.3).

5.1.5 Municipality of Ede

Since 2000, the the municipality of Ede's **Space-to- space policy**, also known as the Pact van Brakkenstein, has been in effect. In addition, the **Menu FoodValley** points the way in the VAB change of job process. This menu is the result of a collaboration between the municipalities of Ede, Wageningen, Barneveld, Nijkerk, Putten and Scherpenzeel, and it is a policy for job

changes, additional positions at agricultural companies and the expansion of non-agricultural companies (Both, Gies, Kuiper & Vogelzang, 2017). The purpose of the Foodvalley Menu is to use new demolition measures on site or elsewhere to create new residential units or non-agricultural businesses or to expand existing businesses and homes (Both et al., 2017). Demolition surfaces from multiple locations can also be merged and, in the event of a functional change, investments must also be made in improving the quality of the countryside (Both et al., 2017). The Foodvalley Regionn, of which Ede is a part, has together with the Amersfoort Regionn, established the **Programme Vacant Agricultural Buildings** in 2017 (Foodvalley Regionn, 2018). The aim is to strengthen spatial quality, economic vitality and quality of life in the rural area (Amersfoort Regionn, 2017).

- In het programma staan zes subdoelen:
1. Duidelijk krijgen van ons gezamenlijke regionale toekomstbeeld en de VAB opgave;
 2. Versterken van de innovatie door het opzetten van nieuwe experimenten;
 3. Verbeteren van de huidige gemeentelijke systematiek;
 4. Meer leren uit de praktijk - ontwikkelen en uitwisselen van kennis;
 5. Vinger aan de pols in de regio - gebiedsregisseur;
 6. Nieuwe mechanismen uitwerken zoals circulair bouwen, tijdelijk bestemmen.

Figure 16: Sub-goals in the Released Agricultural Development program (Bron: Region Amersfoort, 2017)

According to DORPenLANDadvies (2016), it has become increasingly clear that municipal VAB policy in the Netherlands must be scaled up, and that more Regionnal development space must be created to keep the countryside livable. The municipality of Ede also wants to align with the new Environment and Planning Act, whereby the 'yes-if' instead of 'no-unless' method is applied with regard to the granting of permits. In the Ede-Stad 2030 (2017) environmental vision, the municipality emphasises that building new homes and buildings is no longer an end in itself; it must contribute to social goals. This approach overlaps with the Gelderse Ladder for the sustainable use of space (Province of Gelderland, 2018).

5.1.6 Municipality of Barneveld

The vision for the outlying area of the municipality of Barneveld from 2012 states that planning options are offered for a change of function to non-agricultural activity if it concerns released and VABs. The Barneveld 2030 strategic vision describes how the function change policy, with which homes and non-agricultural businesses in the outlying area can be created in exchange for the demolition of stables, will continue. This corresponds to the aforementioned **Space-to- space policy**. A requirement for the new functions is that they are connected to the countryside and agriculture and are interwoven with the local economy (Municipality of Barneveld, nd). Among other aspects, this has led to the municipality of Barneveld being part of the partnership with regard to the **'Foodvalley' menu**. In addition, Barneveld is also a participant in the **Agricultural Building Program**, which was prepared by Region Foodvalley and Amersfoort.

5.1.7 Municipality of Deurne

In 2013, the municipality of Deurne created a VAB policy called 'Boeren met Buren'. However, this no longer seems to exist, and there is no other policy in the municipality that focuses on VABs. Just like any other municipality in Brabant, the residents of Deurne can make use of the provincial regulation(s), such as VAB incentives, and the objectives for the rural area are

described in the structural vision. The municipality wants to distinguish between areas with large-scale agricultural activities and small-scale livestock farms in combination with other functions (Municipality of Deurne, 2018). This means that the rural area is split into a primary agricultural area, also called primag, and an area with a mixed rural economy (Municipality of Deurne, 2018). In the primag, there is room for the development of large livestock farms, provided they are sustainable, healthy, safe and aimed at reducing emissions (Municipality of Deurne, 2018). In the area with a mixed rural economy, space is made for other functions, such as living and recreation. When a shed has a full-fledged new economic function that suits the environment and the business activity itself, part of the agricultural building can remain standing, provided that it is free of asbestos (Municipality of Deurne, 2018). The other stables must be demolished. The municipality of Deurne has established a specific switchover policy for these changes: **Room for Dynamics**. This means that, when a function change takes place, the superfluous buildings must be demolished (Municipality of Deurne, 2018). This stimulates both the demolition of surplus agricultural buildings and the further development of the rural area. To support and promote this transition, the municipality of Deurne has developed a transition programme in addition to the structural vision: **Transition Programme Buitengebied Deurne 'Room for opportunities'** (Municipality of Deurne, 2017). To improve the quality of the landscape, the municipality of Deurne has adopted the **"policy rule for improving the quality of the landscape"** based on the Spatial Planning Regulation of the province of Noord-Brabant (Municipality of Deurne, 2017). If switching to new functions or expanding existing functions occurs, quality improvement must be applied in the landscape to compensate, for example in the form of the demolition of buildings or the construction of greenery (Municipality of Deurne, 2017).

5.1.8 Municipality of Gemert-Bakel

The municipality of Gemert-Bakel aims to allow companies to develop up to 2.5 hectares further in agricultural development areas and to retain existing companies of up to 1.5 hectares in recruitment areas, provided that they do business sustainably (Municipality of Gemert-Bakel, 2011). Here, the expansion must always be done to improve the situation for the entrepreneur, the animal, the neighbours and the environment (Municipality of Gemert-Bakel, 2011). In Gemert-Bakel, experiments are conducted on the basis of the Elsendorp experimental garden, located in the agricultural development area. Here, suitable new destinations for the locations and solutions for empty stables are sought, with the aim of preventing the cluttering of the countryside.

5.1.9 Municipality of Meierijstad

The municipality of Meierijstad continues to develop policy in the field of VABs, which is also referred to as the 'quality framework for VABs'. The municipality of Schijndel, which is part of the municipality of Meierijstad, focuses on the reuse of VABs in the context of maintaining vitality in the rural area (Schijndel, 2012). In addition, the municipality of Schijndel is committed to creating new economic resources for the outlying area, such as tourism-recreational additional positions (Schijndel, 2012). In its structural vision, the municipality of Veghel focuses on the reuse of VABs, provided that the new functions do not interfere with agricultural developments (Veghel, 2013). The municipality of Veghel also offers space for agricultural companies that want to expand, intensify or develop an ancillary function (Veghel, 2013). VABs can also be used for various small-scale economic functions in the vicinity of villages, such as recreation or hospitality.

5.1.10 Municipality of Someren

In the structural vision of the municipality of Someren, two objectives are formulated based on the **Revitalisation of Rural Areas policy**, namely the stimulation of alternative economic opportunities and the enhancement of the quality of life in the countryside. In addition, the municipality of Someren has developed policies for **non-agricultural functions in the outlying areas** and measures to encourage the demolition of former farm buildings (Merkx, Van Soerland, Van Mil, Peeters & Peijnenburg, 2015). The municipality focuses on reducing the vacancy rate of former agricultural buildings and works with three scrapping-stimulating measures, namely **brick-by-brick**, the **extended scrapping bonus scheme** and the **scrapping loan** (Merkx, Van Soerland, Van Mil, Peeters & Peijnenburg, 2015). Figure 17 explains the so-called 'demolition package'.

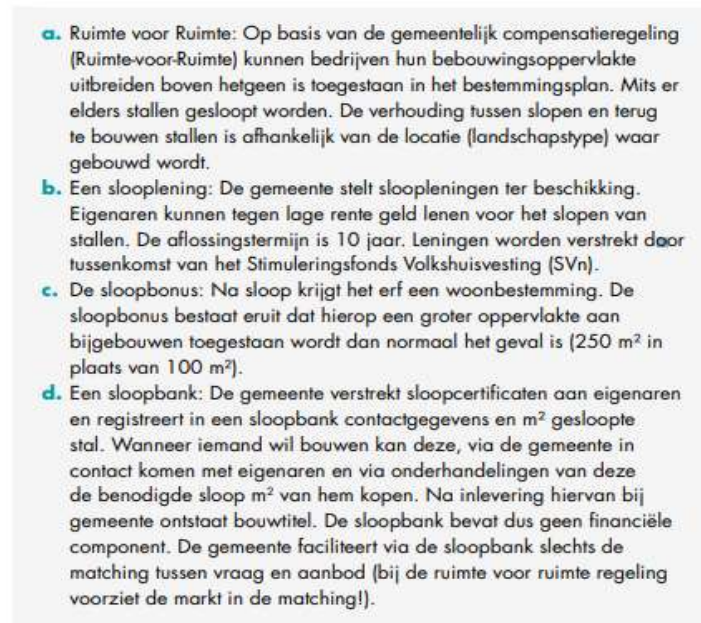
- 
- a. Ruimte voor Ruimte: Op basis van de gemeentelijk compensatieregeling (Ruimte-voor-Ruimte) kunnen bedrijven hun bebouwingsoppervlakte uitbreiden boven hetgeen is toegestaan in het bestemmingsplan. Mits er elders stallen gesloopt worden. De verhouding tussen slopen en terug te bouwen stallen is afhankelijk van de locatie (landschapstype) waar gebouwd wordt.
 - b. Een slooplening: De gemeente stelt sloopleeningen ter beschikking. Eigenaren kunnen tegen lage rente geld lenen voor het slopen van stallen. De aflossingstermijn is 10 jaar. Leningen worden verstrekt door tussenkomst van het Stimuleringsfonds Volkshuisvesting (SVn).
 - c. De sloopbonus: Na sloop krijgt het erf een woonbestemming. De sloopbonus bestaat eruit dat hierop een groter oppervlakte aan bijgebouwen toegestaan wordt dan normaal het geval is (250 m² in plaats van 100 m²).
 - d. Een sloopbank: De gemeente verstrekt sloopcertificaten aan eigenaren en registreert in een sloopbank contactgegevens en m² gesloopte stal. Wanneer iemand wil bouwen kan deze, via de gemeente in contact komen met eigenaren en via onderhandelingen van deze de benodigde sloop m² van hem kopen. Na inlevering hiervan bij gemeente ontstaat bouwtitel. De sloopbank bevat dus geen financiële component. De gemeente faciliteert via de sloopbank slechts de matching tussen vraag en aanbod (bij de ruimte voor ruimte regeling voorziet de markt in de matching!).

Figure 17: Demolition package Someren (Bron: Provincie Noord-Brabant, 2016)

5.1.11 Municipality of Nederweert

The municipality of Nederweert has a joint structural vision with the municipalities of Echt-Susteren, Leudal, Maasgouw, Roerdalen, Weert and Roermond. The aim of this is to consider the redevelopment or upgrading of existing real estate when agricultural buildings are released (Geerts, Alberts & Claessens, 2014).

5.2 Use of spatial VAB instruments

5.2.1 Use of instruments

An instrument that is regularly cited in the literature as a solution to the VAB problems is the Space-to- space policy. However, the experiences of municipalities and provinces with this scheme are both positive and negative, which concern the fact that the Space-to- space policy (or red-for-red policy) differs by municipality. For example, De Wit (Appendix 2) stated that the Space-to- space policy does not work optimally because not all agricultural businesses are allowed to participate; for example, calf and mink farms are excluded from this scheme. In addition, Space-for-space titles in the municipality of Gemert-Bakel are also regularly purchased (Van Extel, Appendix 2). As a result, these titles often come into the hands of the

'rich' citizens (Van Extel, Appendix 2). According to Van Merrienboer (appendix 3), it is important for Space-to- space that social value is created instead of only financial returns for the party that makes use of the scheme. For this reason, the province of Brabant has opted to exclude private individuals from the scheme and to cooperate with other parties, such as housing associations (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3). The Space-to- space policy has also not been found as effective in the municipality of Deurne. This relates to the fact that this municipality is a shrinking area, as a result of which extra homes in the outlying area are not desirable (De Ridder, appendix 6). The more houses that are built in the outlying area, the greater the vacancy of existing houses is (De Ridder, appendix 6). In addition, for people who want to build a new home in the countryside, it is not beneficial because they are unlikely to be able to sell that home in the future in view of the expected increasing (housing) vacancy. According to respondents 1 and 2 (appendix 10), the effect of the Space-to- space policy on VABs is not optimal because there are few programmes for other functions at VAB locations. Respondents 3, 4, 5 and 6 (Appendix 11) see the Space-to- space policy as a major added value in relation to VABs. According to them, this scheme is particularly effective in the field of demolition and re-use of VABs (respondents 3, 4, 5 and 6, appendix 11). According to respondent 6 (appendix 11), a Regionnal framework has been in place in and around Ede since 2008, and it makes the exchange of rights possible.

In addition to the Space-to- space policy that may contribute to solving VABs, various demolition initiatives have also been developed for the demolition of VABs. The parking regulation is such an initiative, and it means that agricultural stables can be expanded if an agricultural company is demolished elsewhere. The stopping farmer then receives compensation for the demolition of the old stables. Opinions on this, however, are divided, since it seems to have the opposite effect. For example, De Ridder (Appendix 6) explained that farmers who want to expand first look for vacant buildings that they can use for their livestock, so that they do not have to "stalderen". As a result, current VABs are still used for agricultural activities, even though the municipality would prefer them to be demolished due to the outdated buildings or undesirable location (De Ridder, appendix 6). Another way to encourage the demolition of stables has the subject of an experiment in the municipality of Gemert-Bakel, which has a demolition fund where people who want to build something donate money that former farmers can use to demolish stables (Niezen, Appendix 2). Calculation methodologies were developed for the barn demolition and new construction, making it a complicated arrangement. At the time, the court decided that it was payment planning and could not be justified (Niezen, Appendix 2). However, such a scrapping fund is still often used in Gelderland (Geurts, Appendix 2). According to De Ridder (appendix 6), a scrapping loan is not successful because people in old age usually no longer want to take out a loan, and a scrapping loan from the government is not necessary because the mortgage interest is already low. In addition, the province of Noord-Brabant has developed 'VAB impulse', as explained in chapter 5.1.3; according to Niezen (appendix 2), this instrument is used quite regularly. In addition to the VAB incentive, various subsidy schemes are available for farmers, such as in Gelderland, where financial assistance is available when farmers make a business plan for the future (Drenth, Appendix 5). They can use this money to conduct research and hire advisors. According to Drenth (appendix 5), this works well and ensures that farmers look at the future of the company earlier and can therefore help prevent VABs. The subsidy for starting farmers is also helpful, and it is intended to reduce the number of young farmers and increase potential business successors. The province of Gelderland focuses on the prevention of VABs, the

deputy said: *'If I sense that agrarian development is not released, I do not have to solve the problem there, too, and then there is already enough released that it is a problem'* (Drenth, appendix 5, p. 30). According to Drenth (appendix 5), the scheme for young farmers granted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Guarantee Scheme for Power-Enhancing Credits, is important in preventing VABs. However, according to him, environmental regulations from the ministries are impeded because they make the mix of city and countryside increasingly difficult (Drenth, Appendix 5). They provide urban dwellers who move to rural areas with more tools to oppose and complain about, especially in areas that are attractive to people from the Randstad. Environmental legislation also makes it difficult to re-use VABs because, when a vacant shed turns into homes, for example, surrounding companies are confronted with even stricter environmental requirements (Drenth, Appendix 5; Niezen, Appendix 2). The country house contributes to this, but not enough (Drenth, appendix 5). However, a country house only applies if the house in question belongs to an agricultural company that is still in operation, so this does not apply to VABs (Van Extel, Appendix 2). Environmental legislation causes more bottlenecks than solutions with regard to VABs (De Ridder, appendix 6). The 50/50 measure, for example, creates a greater gap between farmer and citizen and has no socially or environmentally positive effect according to De Ridder (appendix 6). In the context of increasingly stringent environmental requirements, more and more initiatives have been taken to meet these or even to contribute to the environment. Examples of this are the 'emission-free stable', 'innovative stable' and 'stable of the future' programs. According to Drenth (appendix 5), these programs have positive effects, but they do not contribute to solving VABs because a starting farmer who has to build a new barn would not buy land where he first has to demolish old stables. In addition to these programs, the ministry will soon create the 'warm Subsidy Scheme for Pig Farms' measure aimed at innovating companies and making them more sustainable or clean up. According to Van Merrienboer, this does not solve every problem, but it can be an interesting contribution in a number of places. According to De Ridder (appendix 6), the Subsidy Scheme for Pig Farms would be more effective if the background norm were linked to it instead of the foreground norm and if action was taken not per location, but per area. Geurts also indicated in a motion to Minister Schouten that the 'Subsidy Scheme for Pig Farms' scheme means that pork companies (i.e., those that have a higher chance of a higher odour score) and sow farms (i.e., those that have a lower chance of a higher odour score) are unlikely to participate in the scheme (House of Representatives, 2019).

With regard to the energy transition, solar energy plays a role, particularly solar panels, the solar ladder and projects such as 'sun in the yard'. The solar ladder raises criticism of Drenth (appendix 5) because he believes that solar panels should first be placed on the roof and only then in the yard, but that this should not be elevated to law, as with the Ladder for Sustainable Urbanisation. When a farm becomes a private building, a cash-in loan can also be requested to remove asbestos and to take insulating or energy-generating measures, such as solar panels. The 'asbestos removed, solar panels on it' scheme has no positive effect on solving the VAB problem because it leads to people leaving old stables, collecting the asbestos and installing solar panels (De Ridder, appendix 6).

In order to make farmers aware of what awaits them in the future, the municipality of Deurne uses a subsidy from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality for the 'Later is now' project. Two independent so-called 'heirs-goers' visit farmers who participate in the stopping

scheme to enter into a discussion about the future and to create awareness (De Ridder, appendix 6). According to Drenth (appendix 5), the 'Stoneware utilisation' programme is mainly used in villages and towns, and it is rarely in the rural area.

In a general sense, Van Merrienboer (appendix 3) and respondents 1 and 2 stated that the province of Noord-Brabant has a limited repertoire at its disposal to prevent agricultural vacancy. Generic policy, for example from the central government, is sometimes perceived as an obstacle because the situation differs in every area.

5.2.2 Bottlenecks/problems

Perhaps the most significant dilemma with the VAB problem is the question of who owns the problem and who is willing to pay for the costs of demolition (Van de Ven, appendix 4). For example, all respondents stated that it is primarily a problem for the owner of the VAB. However, because the number of VABs has increased rapidly, it has now become a social problem, as can be read in chapter 4.3.3. Provinces state that it is up to the Municipality to solve the problem, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality has stated that it is up to the provinces and Municipality (Haije, Appendix 8). According to deputy Drenth (appendix 5), better cooperation between the Ministries of Home Affairs and Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality is also required. Butz (appendix 7) believes that it is not justified to have the VAB problem run in the municipality where the problem is large, in particular small municipalities in shrinking areas. These municipalities do not have the capacity, people and knowledge to solve this problem (Butz, Appendix 7).

Another important bottleneck with regard to being able to solve the VAB problems relates to the settlement with the tax authorities when terminating an agricultural business. Every respondent mentioned paying off the tax authorities as a problem and as the cause of the occurrence of VABs, as already described in chapter 4.3.2. The problem lies in postponing the permanent cessation of the company when it is no longer financially viable, in particular because the owners are concerned about the settlement and financial resources that they may or may not have afterwards with regard to their pension (Drenth, Appendix 5: Van Merrienboer, Appendix 3). As a result, the agricultural buildings become older and investments are no longer made, as a result of which the quality deteriorates and re-use is no longer possible when the building becomes permanently vacant. As Van Merrienboer (appendix 3, p. 15) said: *'The point is that, at the moment, there are a huge number of people on the roundabout but not taking a turn'*. This means that companies that are actually no longer active still possess permits, so they are still included on paper in the taxation of odour-sensitive objects, while this location is unlikely to be used again for livestock farming. The stables are stolen or used for improper purposes, and the property is unsellable if the owner is forced to move due to old age (De Ridder, appendix 6). When the owner dies, there is a chance that the heirs may refuse the inheritance because of the high costs of demolishing or changing the function, leaving these buildings as abandoned locations in rural areas (De Ridder, appendix 6). Financial aid from the government is dangerous because then state aid is quickly discussed since ownership is not obtained (Van de Ven, appendix 4).

According to respondent 6 (Appendix 11), policy-based RO options, in addition to tax legislation, are limited by environmental and nature legislation. For example, the PAS ensures that developments such as the construction of access roads, houses or business parks in the

vicinity of a nature reserve are made difficult (Butz, Annex 7). The PAS continues to evolve, and it is not yet known whether its consequences are positive or negative. Environmental legislation also provides for restrictions with regard to the re-use of agricultural real estate, as this can hamper agricultural businesses in the area (Niezen, appendix 2; Van Extel, appendix 2). This can conflict with the future hot rehabilitation of pig farming because the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality expects municipalities and provinces to arrange the re-use, since otherwise, the farmer does not receive any money (Van Extel, appendix 2). Mortgage lenders also constitute an obstacle to the re-use of an agricultural location because they are not generous when it concerns an agricultural business or another function (Niezen, Appendix 2). In addition, it is difficult for municipalities to determine when another position at an agricultural location is desired because an overcapacity in the same type of activity can turn out badly, as well as for the entrepreneurs themselves. When every VAB is transformed into a bed and breakfast, for example, they become each other's competitors. According to Van de Ven (appendix 4), giving free rein to the entrepreneurs themselves is not an option because, in that case, homes are developed everywhere, while this is not always desirable in view of, among other aspects, the liveability and the surplus housing in certain Regions. It is important that municipalities or provinces maintain control (De Ridder, appendix 6). When switching from an agricultural destination to another destination, the living climate for the new destination is considered. Currently, this is often assessed as insufficient, which is another reason it is difficult to re-use VABs (De Ridder, appendix 6).

Municipalities encounter generic policy from the central government that is not specifically applicable, but sometimes, it is necessary to solve the VAB problems in a certain Region (De Wit, appendix 2). Various respondents stated that legislation is not always clear and processes often take a long time, which hinders current, stopped or starting agricultural entrepreneurs from innovating or taking steps (respondent 3, appendix 11; Van Extel, appendix 2; Sneezing, appendix 2). Sometimes, the policy is not well coordinated between governments, such as between municipalities and provinces, resulting in miscommunication or obstacles. For example, this includes requests from initiators who want to invest, while money from the province only becomes available later, as a result of which the initiators are too late to apply for pre-financing (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3). In addition, the environmental law imposed on municipalities by the Government of 2021 is not by definition an opportunity, since the time and effort that is already involved is at the expense of what could be used to resolve other spatial problems, such as VABs (Van Extel, Appendix 2).

In a general sense, De Ridder (appendix 6) stated that the rules that people should protect do not adequately protect them; rather, they limit farmers too much.

5.2.3 Needs/solutions

With regard to environmental legislation, there is a need for policy and opportunities to shape the transition (Van Extel, Appendix 2). One such example could involve forming a team with various government layers in which the best solutions and possibilities for meeting environmental requirements are discussed. Customisation is also an option, for example, by giving municipalities the authority to deviate from loosely defined laws and regulations to address matters in a more comprehensive way (respondent 3, appendix 11; Van Merrienboer, appendix 3; De Wit, appendix 2). Spatial planning is considered a local problem for which generic policy is not effective (Butz, appendix 7). Customisation also means creating

frameworks within which innovation, new ideas and other forms of business can take place and are more development-oriented (De Ridder, appendix 6). According to Butz and respondent 6 (appendices 7 and 11), when solving VABs, it is also important that the municipal and provincial boundaries are considered and that cooperation between Regions can be effective. A joint approach between the parties involved, such as agricultural and horticultural organisations, residents and municipalities, is also desirable (Haije, Appendix 8). To improve cooperation between ministries and perhaps other government institutions, one idea is to appoint a person, for example a coordinating official or director, to operate across the ministries (De Kruijf, appendix 9).

Regarding changing destinations, it is important to speed up job change processes and to support companies that want to switch (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3). However, the stables of the 60s are difficult to re-use, but the land released after the building has been demolished could be built on in such a way that it is profitable again, for example with homes or care homes (Van de Ven, Annex 4; Van Merrienboer, appendix 3). A global framework for this is desirable because additional homes are not desired everywhere in the Netherlands. The central government can also make agreements with municipalities about the costs that applicants for a change of destination must pay to the municipality, also known as the fees; these could be remitted or subsidised so that municipalities themselves can develop creative solutions (De Ridder, appendix 6). One example is a fund with which certain locations can be 'wiped clean', or a municipal real estate branch that ensures that certain locations are refurbished and others are demolished to provide space for nature (De Ridder, annex 6). Another element that can be changed is the way in which new destinations or functions are tested. These are assessed on the basis of the current situation, and future developments are not taken into account, as a result of which, re-allocation applications are regularly denied (De Ridder, appendix 6). However, when looking at the location and the area, it is often easy to estimate how it will develop in the near future. The livestock farms that are likely to stop in the coming years still block the conversion of the surrounding locations (De Ridder, appendix 6). This method of planning is also referred to as development-oriented re-use.

According to a number of respondents, to reduce the problems with regard to already existing VABs, one option is to develop scrapping schemes. For example, Van de Ven (Appendix 4) expects to gain an advantage when municipalities make collective demolition agreements with entrepreneurs that they know will stop. Representative Drenth (appendix 5) believes that the government should develop a scrapping scheme that is linked to the reduction of livestock in the context of manure legislation, phosphates and the climate agreement. This would achieve goals in an affordable way and help the sector because the weak companies would disappear and the strong ones would be maintained. According to Drenth (appendix 5), the manure legislation can be removed because it is no longer necessary if there is no manure surplus. In this way, the phosphate problem is 'solved'.

Respondent 1 (appendix 10) stated that forcing demolition is a possible solution, but the question can be raised as to whether it is desirable because (former) farmers are generally unable to pay for it and enter into debt in their old age. Respondent 1 (Appendix 10) therefore said that there must be ways in which demolition becomes financially feasible for farmers. De Ridder (appendix 6) proposed charging a deposit on new agricultural buildings so that their demolition will be financially guaranteed in the future. One way to combine innovation with demolition is to subsidise farmers who want to install solar panels on the yard or roof of a

building by subsidising the demolition of another (old) building (Van Merrienboer, appendix 3). In addition, Van Extel (appendix 2) proposed introducing a periodic inspection at stables so that they are periodically inspected; the innovation of stables is necessary because it makes them less likely to decay and become unusable. However, in view of the increasing number of rules that farmers have to comply with in recent years and the large number of farmers ending their farms, it does not seem desirable to create more rules.

To make demolition more financially attractive, it could help to make a larger part of the demolition costs tax-deductible (Foodvalley Regionn & Amersfoort Regionn, 2017). This is understood to mean that the tax deduction for the demolition costs would be set at 150% of the actual demolition costs incurred (Region Foodvalley & Region Amersfoort, 2017). Another way to financially help stopping farmers is to postpone settlement with the tax authorities (Foodvalley Regionn & Amersfoort Regionn, 2017; Van de Ven, Annex 4; De Kruijf, Annex 9; Drenth, Annex 5; Butz, Annex 7). It is essential that this deferment scheme does not include the current collection interest, which ensures that farmers have to pay back an additional 4% per year (Foodvalley Regionn & Amersfoort Regionn, 2017). When stopping farmers have 10 years to pay the tax debt, an entrepreneur would have some space and possibly offer to demolish the agricultural buildings. In addition to making the demolition costs tax-deductible and postponing the settlement with the tax authorities, equalising the difference in valuations of the WEV and WEVAB is also an option to accommodate stopping farmers (Foodvalley Regionn & Amersfoort Regionn, 2017). When these values are equal, the income tax due on the value development of the property and the land becomes considerably lower. In order to encourage young farmers to start a new business, an extended application of the reinvestment reserve in the context of income tax is an option (Foodvalley Regionn & Amersfoort Regionn, 2017). This ensures that, when starting a new business, young entrepreneurs do not encounter the fiscal hurdles with regard to the settlement of the agricultural defeat strike (Region Foodvalley & Region Amersfoort, 2017).

Regarding the Space-for-space arrangement (or red-for-red arrangement), there is a need for new construction that offers more space to consider improving spatial quality by using housing construction as a revenue model against the demolition of the unwanted vacant buildings (De Wit, Appendix 2). A rural fund could possibly be linked to this, into which a certain amount would be deposited when building houses (Geurts, appendix 2). The challenge in this is to find a role for the government because governments should not act as banks (De Wit, Appendix 2). According to Van Extel (appendix 2), it is also important that Space-for-space titles can no longer be purchased; rather, they must be linked to the demolition of an empty stable or shed.

To give municipalities insight into the situation with regard to agricultural activity, better access to data files from governments and authorities, such as agricultural censuses, is desirable (De Kruijf, appendix 9; respondent 6, appendix 11).

Other wishes from the respondents are that permits should be frozen on a certain date, Van Extel stated (appendix 2, p 3): *'So just freeze it and just say before that date, all old permits still apply for that, because then we can make a change, otherwise we just won't succeed. Then it's just stuck.'*

Finally, Van de Ven (appendix 4) stated that the chance of solving the VAB problems lies in offering options by law instead of making statutory regulations from the central government, so that governments, private individuals and entrepreneurs can work together.

6. Theory analysis

In this chapter, the results are linked to the theory from chapter 2. In particular, the theoretical models from chapter 2 and the conceptual model in figure 10 play a central role.

Based on the results described in chapters 4 and 5, it can be stated that the causes of the occurrence of VABs according to Geerling-Eiff and Van der Meulen (2008), as shown in figure 3, are largely correct. However, strict environmental regulations and tax settlement when stopping a company were not specifically mentioned here. Some of the respondents also considered the subsidies provided by the government in the past to be one of the causes of VABs. One way to give agricultural companies more perspective on the future is by broadening them with secondary branches, as also stated in the theory in chapter 2.1.4. With regard to the effects of VABs, this corresponds to the theory of Agricola et al. (2010), NVM (2017a) and Nemeth and Landhorst (2014). What is missing, however, is the fact that the presence of VABs endangers the efficient use of space. Space in the Netherlands is scarce, and there is a great need for functions other than agriculture, such as living or generating energy.

Regarding government governance, the 'hard regulation', as mentioned in the theory of four domain stress types or co-regulation (Steurer, 2013) in Figure 4, is seen as limiting the resolution of VAB problems. although the 'soft regulation' is not necessarily experienced as positive. The strict environmental regulations, for example, would prevent small businesses from sustaining their business and thus stop them, resulting in buildings becoming vacant. In addition, direct settlement with the tax authorities when stopping a business leads to entrepreneurs stopping if it is too late and the buildings no longer have value. Respondents repeatedly mentioned public co-regulation (Figure 4) in the form of cooperation between the government and the stopping farmers as part of the solution to the problem. A demolition fund from the government, into which people who build houses deposit money that former farmers can use to demolish stables, is an example of a tripartite co-regulation (Figure 4).

Regarding the extent to which the national instruments are sufficient for municipalities and provinces to solve the VAB problems, this has been measured on the basis of the theory of Hemerijck (2003). This theory states that policy instruments must make a clear contribution to the realisation of political objectives (Hemerijck, 2003). In the case of this study, the objectives are to prevent the creation of VABs and to resolve VABs. Some policy instruments contribute to achieving the objectives, while others do not or even have the opposite effect. Such policy therefore aggravates the problem, and it includes the settlement with tax authorities and stricter environmental legislation. The answer to the question of whether the national instruments are effective with regard to the VAB problems is given in Chapter 7, the conclusion.

7. Conclusion

To what extent are the preventive and curative instruments of the central government effective for the provinces and the municipalities in solving the problems with regard to released agricultural buildings?

The central government has no specific policy in the area of released agricultural buildings and, according to the respondents, municipalities and provinces have few instruments to address the VAB problems.

Some municipalities interviewed benefit from the Space-to-space policy, but it is precisely in the areas where the problem is greatest that extra homes are not desirable because they are shrinking Regions. In municipalities where the population is growing and there is a need for extra housing, the Space-to-space policy is generally used to build new homes and to demolish VABs.

Municipalities and provinces consider the settlement with the tax authorities that must be paid when a business stops is considered one of the main causes of the emergence of VABs. Farmers do not want to officially terminate the company because of the tax settlement, and therefore, they continue as long as possible until it no longer works, which means that the buildings are of little value when released.

In addition, the increasingly strict nature and environmental regulations of the government, including the PAS, ensure that agricultural companies are barely solvent. Farmers have to comply with more and more rules with their companies, which means that it is no longer sustainable for small businesses.

Respondents were generally also not enthusiastic about the coming environmental vision because of the money and time necessary to prepare for it as a municipality, while this time and money could also be spent on solving spatial issues, such as the VAB problems.

Provinces and municipalities have no insight into how the government's subsidy schemes, such as POP3 or GVK, are used, so no statement can be made in this regard.

What is the current situation with regard to the size and expectation regarding the release of agricultural buildings?

In total, approximately 11 million square metres of farm buildings are vacant, and it is expected that, by 2030, a total of 9.7 million square metres will be available in the provinces of Gelderland and Noord-Brabant. The buildings that are vacant and are expected to become vacant were built between 1970 and 2000; because they contain asbestos, they are therefore difficult to reuse and are expensive to demolish.

What has been written in the literature about released agricultural buildings?

The causes and effects of VABs are described in the literature, according to which the main causes can be subdivided into the personal situation of the farmer, the environment in which the company is located, the company's characteristics and other situation-specific aspects. According to the literature, VABs have an influence on the quality of the rural area as a result of impoverishment of buildings, which leads young people to move away from the Region. In addition, a positive effect of VABs is that when a building and yard are pledged, this ensures

that nature can take its course, which can lead to improved air quality, the infiltration of rainwater into the boulders and the correction of any polluted soil.

In the literature, it can be found that no less than 25% of agricultural companies have a side branch to increase their financial profitability, also called multifunctional agriculture, which can contribute to the prevention of VABs.

Government guidance can make people feel better, the literature shows. The theory of 'four domain stress types or co-regulation' shows how cooperation is possible between society, companies and the government. As far as government policy is concerned, according to the 'four key questions of policy', it is important that it works, fits, belongs and is allowed. Whether policy works is measured by its effectiveness, which means that policy implementation must contribute to achieving a political goal.

When stakeholders are involved as early as possible in a policy-making process, this ensures a higher demographic legitimacy, a smaller gap between citizens and government, an increase in problem-solving capacity, an increase in the quality of policy, an increase in support for policy and a faster policy process. The early involvement of other people in policy development is called 'interactive policy'. The policy cycle consists of six phases: agenda preparation, policy formulation, identification, implementation, evaluation and maintenance. According to the literature, the municipalities' instruments consists of various elements that can largely be designed by municipalities themselves. The space-for-space scheme is the best known example of this and is aimed at improving the overall quality of urban and rural areas.

What policy is now active with regard to the release of agricultural buildings?

The government has not developed a specific policy on the theme 'agricultural vacancy'. Based on the interviews and desk research, policy related to the VAB theme includes the CAP, the Structural Vision for Infrastructure and Spatial Planning, the POP3 grants, the GVK, the Rural House Act, the Ladder for Sustainable Urbanisation, the Space for Spatial Planning regulation, the Nature and Environmental legislation, the PAS and, soon, the Subsidy Scheme for Pig Farms.

What are the needs or wishes of the municipalities and provinces with regard to central government policy?

Respondents agree that there should be room in environmental legislation, which creates opportunities to shape the agricultural transition. Generic government policy is also considered an obstacle, and it offers few opportunities for development and innovation within the sector. There is a need for customisation, also at a national level, within which frameworks are created for innovation, new ideas and other forms of business.

According to the respondents, there are opportunities in the area of re-use, in particular with regard to the duration of the process and support for farmers who want to change, and also with regard to drafting a global framework within which re-use may be possible. In the case of re-use, there is also the desire to re-designate in a more future-oriented way instead of testing against the current situation.

The results also show that a solution for demolition is needed, such as demolition funds or demolition schemes, in combination with creating opportunities for energy transition, reducing livestock or housing.

With regard to the fiscal aspect, postponing the settlement without collection interest is proposed as a solution for the release of agricultural buildings. Increasing the tax-deductible part of the demolition costs or equalising the differences in valuations of the WEV and WEVAB were also mentioned as solutions.

Within the space-for-space scheme, the desire is to develop new constructions that offer more space with regard to the use of housing as a revenue model against the demolition of unwanted vacant buildings, possibly linked to a rural fund.

Another wish of municipalities is to gain more access to existing data files from governments and authorities so that they can gain more insight into the situation regarding VABs and can respond to it.

The desire was also expressed to operate on a larger scale instead of having municipalities or provinces operate individually because certain schemes can then be more effective.

Can the current preventive and curative policy instruments of the central government meet the needs of the provinces and the municipalities, or is a new law/law amendment necessary?

The current policy instruments of the central government are not sufficient or effective for municipalities and provinces in which the VAB problem is relatively large with regard to solving or preventing VABs. To be able to solve the problem in these Regions, there is a need to change the law or to develop new regulations.

8. Recommendations

1. Lower the odour standard in the 'Subsidy Scheme for Pig Farms' so that sow farms can also participate, and the effect on solving the VAB problem would thus increase.
2. In the context of the stimulation of stable demolition, the circular economy and the reduction of CO2 emissions, the use of demolition debris of former agricultural stables for the construction of infrastructure is an opportunity. This could include making a percentage of debris required for use in roads in the Region instead of importing it from abroad. The contractor could then choose to demolish the buildings himself to avoid costs, or to buy the debris from the demolished stable of the (former) farmer, whereby the farmer would partly repay the costs of the demolition.
3. Create more frameworks instead of strict, generic laws on environmental legislation.
4. Look at other options with regard to the settlement with tax authorities in the event of business termination, for example by postponing the payment without interest on interest, making demolition costs deductible to a greater extent, equalising the difference in WEV and WEVAB or widening the application for the reinvestment reserve.

5. From the central government, provide less steering towards scaling up and offering more support to small businesses. Increasing the profit margin per product is necessary.
6. Create new construction within demolition schemes, for example, combining shrinking livestock or sustainable initiatives.

9. Discussion

A point of discussion in this study is the fact that its reliability would be higher if more interviews were held throughout the country. In this study, however, it was decided to only include the municipalities and provinces in which the VAB problem was greatest because the Regions without the problem were not expected to have suggestions for additions or changes to the government policy. It may therefore be the case that this study implies that this is a national problem, while this is not necessarily the case. However, this does not mean that it cannot become a national problem in the future.

Another point of discussion is that the questionnaire was not strictly used in the interviews because the interviewer responded to the answers that were given. As a result, the respondents may have given slightly different answers if the question were asked in a different way. In addition, not as much information was available or collected from every municipality or province. This was due to the fact that not all of the approached municipalities were willing to be interviewed, but they completed the questionnaire about VABs from the Ministry of Interior Affairs in 2018 that was made available for this study.

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Appendix

Bijlage 1	Vragenlijst interviews		
Bijlage 2	Transcriptie (gecodeerd)	Van Extel Niezen De Wit	Seperate document
Bijlage 3	Transcriptie (gecodeerd)	Van Merrienboer	Seperate document
Bijlage 4	Transcriptie (gecodeerd)	Van de Ven	Seperate document
Bijlage 5	Transcriptie (gecodeerd)	Drenth	Seperate document
Bijlage 6	Transcriptie (gecodeerd)	De Ridder	Seperate document
Bijlage 7	Transcriptie (gecodeerd)	Butz	Seperate document
Bijlage 8	Transcriptie (gecodeerd)	Hendrix Haije	Seperate document
Bijlage 9	Transcriptie (gecodeerd)	De Kruijf Van Nieuwenhuizen	Seperate document
Bijlage 10	Externe data (gecodeerd)	Provincies	Seperate document
Bijlage 11 document	Externe data (gecodeerd)	Municipality ofn	Seperate

Appendix 1

Interview format

Naam:

Locatie:

Organisatie:

Datum, tijd:

Akkoord opname: Ja/nee

----start opname----

Introductie:

- Master Planologie, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, specialisatie strategische spatial planning
- Afstudeeronderzoek bij CDA-Tweede Kamerfractie
- Master scriptie over het VAB-beleid van de rijksoverheid en in hoeverre deze toereikend is voor Municipality ofn en provincies om het probleem in hun Region op te lossen
- Doel: voldoet het landelijke beleidsinstrumentarium aan de wensen van Municipality ofn/provincies?

Vragen voor Municipality ofn en provincies:

1. Uw Municipality of/provincie behoort tot één van de Municipality ofn/provincies met de grootste hoeveelheid agrarische leegstand. Wat is hier de oorzaak van, waarom is het in de Municipality of/provincie ... erger dan in de meeste andere Municipality ofn?
2. In hoeverre ervaren jullie de agrarische leegstand als een probleem?
3. ALLEEN INDIEN MUNICIPALITY OF: Welke Municipality oflijke wetten/regelingen/beleidsdocumenten zijn er in uw Region (mbt VAB's)? *structuurvisie/omgevingsvisie/Programma...*
 - En in hoeverre wordt hier gebruik van gemaakt?
 - Hebben deze regelingen effect (gehad)? Waarom wel/niet?
 - Indien structuurvisie/omgevingsvisie: is er een uitvoeringsprogramma aanwezig mbt beleidsinstrumenten, budget en tijd voor oplossen van VAB's?
4. Welke provinciale wetten/regelingen zijn er in uw Region (mbt VAB's)?
 - En in hoeverre wordt hier gebruik van gemaakt?
 - Hebben deze regelingen effect (gehad)? Waarom wel/niet?
5. Wordt er gebruik gemaakt van de landelijke wetten/regelingen en zo ja, zijn deze effectief? *(bijvoorbeeld POP3, garantieregeling vermogensversterkende kredieten, ...)*
6. Wat zou op beleidsterrein nodig zijn om het (al dan niet) VAB-probleem in uw Region op te lossen?
 - Zou de nationale overheid hierbij kunnen helpen (lees: wijzigen/invoeren van beleid)? En zo ja, hoe dan?

- Wordt de Municipality of/provincie ... in het oplossen van de VAB-problematiek belemmerd door landelijke beleidsdocumenten/wetten/regelgeving? (bijv. *Ladder voor duurzame verstedelijking, GLB, Bro, Wro, ...*)
7. Welke andere problemen op het gebied van ruimtelijke ordening spelen momenteel nog meer in uw Region? (bijv. woningtekort, ...)

Vragen voor Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit:

8. In hoeverre houdt u/Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit zich momenteel bezig met het toenemende aantal VAB's?
9. Wat zijn volgens u de oorzaken van het ontstaan van VAB's? Waardoor is het in bepaalde Region's erger dan in andere Region's?
10. In hoeverre wordt het grote aantal VAB's (en de toekomstige verwachting) binnen het ministerie als een probleem gezien? En in hoeverre voelt de rijksoverheid zich verantwoordelijk voor de VAB-"problematiek"?
11. Is het volgens u nodig om het aantal VAB's terug te dringen?
12. Wordt er momenteel vanuit het ministerie iets gedaan aan het voorkomen/oplossen van VAB's en zo ja, wat dan? (mbt beleid, sturing, etc.) En is dat (tot dusver) effectief?
13. Is er in het verleden beleid geweest wat van invloed was/is op VAB's? Was dat beleid effectief? Waarom wel/niet?
14. Zijn er volgens u (nog meer) mogelijkheden om vanuit de Rijksoverheid het aantal VAB's terug te dringen? En zo ja, wat zijn de mogelijkheden volgens u?
15. Welke andere ontwikkelingen (buiten VAB's) spelen volgens u momenteel op het platteland/in de agrarische sector?

